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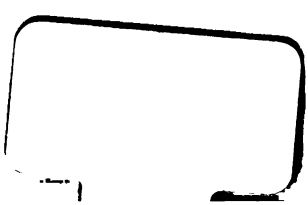

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THE

SPEECHES

OF

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

WILLIAM PITT,

IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

QUANTO MAGIS ADMIRABEMINI SI AUDISSETIS IPSUM!

CICERO.

THE SECOND EDITION.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, AND ORME,
PATERNOSTER-ROW;

J. HATCHARD, PICCADILLY; AND BLACKS AND PARRY,
LEADENHALL-STREET.

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MR. PITT'S

PARLIAMENTARY SPEECHES.

December 14, 1798.

MR. HOBART brought up the report of the committee on the bill for imposing a general tax upon income. On the question, "that this report be now taken into further consideration,"

Mr. PITT, in reply to Sir John Sinclair, and some other members, who had expressed their decided hostility to the bill, spoke to the following effect:

SIR,—Impressed as I am with the conviction that there never was a subject of greater importance in all its aspects, and in all its consequences, agitated within these walls, I should not have thought it incumbent upon me, in the present stage of the business, to have troubled you with any observations, were there not some points which have been touched upon to-night, which I am desirous, as soon as possible, to place in their proper point of view. What has been urged by some gentlemen who spoke in the course of the debate, while it could not be considered fairly as argument, was directed in such a manner against the farther progress of the measure, was so calculated to excite prejudice, and to beget misconception, that it demands some degree of notice. It is a satisfaction to me to find that the propriety of raising a certain part of the supplies within the year has in general been conceded. If we can judge from what has appeared to-night, there is nobody in the house, except the honourable baronet* who opened the debate, who is disposed to contest the

* Sir John Sinclair.

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principle. I am thus relieved from the necessity of detaining the house with any argument upon that subject, or saying any thing in reply to one solitary antagonist by whom the principle was denied. Whatever authority may belong to that individual member, and no man has more, the worthy baronet himself seemed to rest entirely upon that authority, as he did not add a single argument in support of his position. The house then will no doubt be willing to dispense with any argument upon this branch of the question.

There were some others, however, who, entering upon the consideration of the subject with liberal professions of approbation, and a firm conviction of the necessity of great and extraordinary exertion in the cause in which we are engaged; admitting the benefits which might be derived both in present vigour and permanent resources, from the plan of raising great part of the supplies within the year, yet thought themselves at liberty, not after full consideration of the whole details, not after weighing maturely the regulations by which this great principle is to be carried into execution, and followed up with effect, not after long and sincere endeavours to remedy what was defective, and to improve what was wrong, reluctantly to dismiss the measure as impracticable to the end proposed, but, in the first instance, hastily, peremptorily, and impatiently, to shut the door against all improvement, and to oppose all farther deliberation. Although agreeing in the principle, and aware as they must be that a measure of such magnitude and importance must depend much upon the arrangement of details, and the regulation of provisions, they seem resolved to check all attempt to bring these points again into consideration. Confessing the necessity of great and vigorous efforts for the salvation of the country, in which some of them, now for the first time, have tardily discovered, that our safety is involved, they do not wait to reject the measure upon any ground of final and invincible objection, but they come forward to resist it in the very outset, previous to a mature examination of its details, and a sincere endeavour to correct its provisions.

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The honourable gentleman who spoke last* approves of the principle of raising a considerable part of the supplies within the year, but he declares himself an enemy to any plan of rendering that principle effectual by a general tax. The house will, no doubt, think this a most valuable concession of the honourable gentleman! If it be necessary for the effort which we are called upon to make, if it be essential to the firm establishment of public credit, to the future prosperity of the empire, to obtain that supply which is requisite for the vigorous prosecution of the contest, it is evident that it must be obtained by a sudden tax immediately productive. If it is impossible, by an increase of the existing taxes on consumption, by introducing evils ten times more severe than those which are imputed to this measure, it is evident that nothing can realize the principle but some extraordinary and general tax. If the honourable gentleman, as I perceive he does, admits that such an increase of the taxes on consumption as would produce ten millions within the year is impracticable, it follows that there is no other mode but a tax upon property, so far as it can be discovered. We must lay the contribution, then, either upon capital or on income. From this general operation, however, the honourable gentleman would exempt all those whom he is pleased to call exclusively the useful classes, and lay the whole of the weight on what he calls the useless class. In the class of useless the honourable gentleman has thought proper to rank all the proprietors of land, those men who form the line which binds and knits society together—those on whom, in a great measure, the administration of justice, and the internal police of the country depends;—those men from whom the poor receive employment, from whom agriculture derives its improvement and support, and to whom, of course, commerce itself is indebted for the foundation on which it rests. Yet this class the honourable gentleman thinks proper to stigmatize as useless drones, of no estimation or merit in the eyes of society. When the consequences with which this light flippant theory, the offspring of mere temporary unthinking policy, would be attend-

* Mr. W. Smith.

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ed, are fairly considered, the honourable gentleman will find that his distinction between useful and useless classes is as little founded in truth, as the practical system he founds upon it would be consistent with the general interest of those whom he thinks entitled to peculiar favour. The question then is, whether capital or income be the proper object of contribution? The honourable gentleman says that capital is the criterion which ought to be adopted in the case of the commercial man, and income where it is derived from land. Taking for granted, that the principles of the honourable gentleman were well founded, no less than three fourths of the whole income liable to contribution is calculated to arise from this source. Even upon his own argument, then, he ought not to consider this measure as so incurable as to refuse going into the committee. If, then, he is sincere in his profession of desire to facilitate the raising of a considerable part of the supplies within the year, why should he refuse to proceed farther in a measure which is at least capable of embracing three fourths of his object; and in other parts susceptible of alteration and improvement? If, however, what has been so universally recognised as important to be done, is to be done effectually, and the great consideration is, on which of these leading objects it will be most advantageous to the public, and least inconvenient to the classes of contribution to impose this general and comprehensive tax, I am afraid, that to that very plan, which he himself thinks preferable, those objections on which he rested the desponding hope, that the country neither could, nor would submit to the measure, would apply with aggravated force. Every objection, which he so long and vehemently urged against the danger of disclosure, will apply to those new theories of policy on which he would act. The honourable gentleman says, he is against disclosure. How, then, is he to ascertain the amount of that commercial capital, the profits of which he thinks might justly be made to contribute? Would he be contented with that loose declaration, which experience has proved to be so favourable to evasion? Would he recognise the justice of a principle, which he would utterly defeat and nullify by the

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provisions he recommends to carry it into effect? What then does he do to support that great cause, to invigorate those extraordinary efforts which are necessary for our success in a contest, which all but a few, who but lately have got some few lights, have long considered to be connected with our existence? Yet, when appearing for the first time as a proselyte to the cause of his country and of mankind, though standing in the new character of a convert, he still retains so much of the bias of his old opinions, that he denies the means of rendering those measures effective, which he acknowledges to be indispensable, and carrying into practice that principle which he professes to approve.

The real dispute between us, then, is nothing but a matter of detail. The greater part of the honourable gentleman's speech was founded upon objections to the provisions of the bill; and many of his objections were either utterly unfounded in any thing it contains, or they were of such a nature as to admit of being corrected in the committee. In arguing the matter in this way, in the present stage, the honourable gentleman could be regular only upon a point of strict form. He knows very well that the bill went through the committee to get the blanks filled up without undergoing any discussion in that stage, and that it was intended to submit it at a future period to the detailed examination of a committee. But granting that the present was, in a fair view of the subject, the proper stage for the discussion of points of detail, let us see what are the objections which, in the honourable gentleman's estimation, are so fatal to the measure. To the main objection, which he urged so repeatedly, and with so much acrimony, it may easily be answered, that the honourable gentleman assumes what is not in the bill. It seemed to be taken up merely to afford him an opportunity of embellishing his discourse with the violent invective and offensive epithet by which it was distinguished. I allude to what was stated respecting the character and duties of the surveyor to be appointed under the bill. I will not recapitulate the odious description which the honourable gentleman applied to the persons who were to act in this capacity. What is the purpose—what is

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the tendency of such invective? What can be the effect of this reproachful language, thus indiscriminately applied, but to bring into discredit those officers under the revenue, without which it could not be collected, and without which public business must be at a stand? The honourable gentleman says, that the surveyor is at liberty to surcharge to any amount, and pending the appeal to which this surcharge gives rise, the tax will continue to be levied on the whole of the demand, including the surcharge. What is the remedy which the honourable gentleman discovers for this? He tells us, in alluding to a remark of an honourable baronet*, that the discussion of the appeal might be rendered so intricate as to consume six, or even twelve months. This objection the honourable gentleman urges triumphantly, at the very time too that he states it to be the mode which a person surcharged will adopt for his relief, at the very moment when he is compelled to acquiesce in the payment of a surcharge, from which he takes care that it shall be impossible for the commissioners of appeal to relieve him! Such an argument is the consequence which is stated. In fact, however, it so happens, that no such grievance can exist. The surveyor's surcharge is not acted upon in the first instance, unless confirmed by the commissioners. The surveyor has no discretion whatever to add to the charge on which the contributor shall be compelled to pay. The objections of the honourable gentleman, instead of operating against the bill *in toto*, demonstrate the necessity of going into the committee, that the bill may obtain a full consideration, and a fair discussion.

As to the general declamation upon the character and function of the surveyor, whom some gentlemen are pleased to consider in the odious light of a spy, it is a matter for the committee to adjust the powers and the duties with which he shall be entrusted. Is this, however, any argument for the immediate rejection of the bill? Does the honourable gentleman really think that no precaution whatever ought to be taken to avoid those scandalous evasions which there is but too much reason to

* Sir Francis Baring.

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expect may be attempted? But it is maintained by the honourable gentleman, that no evasions have taken place to defeat the operation of the assessed tax bill which passed last session. He is peculiarly fortunate in the instances which have occurred to him, with respect to the patriotism of his friends; but he has rated their zeal beyond the mark. It is rather singular that he has not taken the opportunity of extolling their liberality in subscribing to the voluntary contributions. The observations made by the friends of government, are, however, of a very different kind. His must have been a chosen circle, yet others were as large as the honourable gentleman's, before the new lights broke in upon him. But notwithstanding the assertion, I must say, that great and notorious instances of the concealment of property have occurred, the check provided by the legislature has been found insufficient to produce any adequate end, and the declarations which have been given in, have, on various occasions, eluded the expected operation of the act. Is it not then a matter of great concernment—is it not a subject worthy of grave deliberation, to consider what means may be devised to render the measure proposed as efficient as possible to the public service? The surveyor is not to be a person on whose discretion any assessment is to depend: he is to *assist* the commissioners with *information*, and to discharge that duty which his oath prescribes, of preventing evasion where it might be within his knowledge that it was attempted. It is said, in proof of the importance of the surveyor's office, that they have great influence with the commissioners in other matters where the revenue is concerned; but, when the character of the commissioners is taken into view, this remark will prove that, instead of that profligate, worthless class, which the honourable gentleman describes, they are men who recommended themselves by the propriety of their conduct and the performance of their duty. But, says the honourable gentleman, the surveyor is the only man whom we consider as likely to be bound by his oath. Yet is there no distinction between the cases? Is the temptation to perjure the same? Has the man who is sworn to the performance of his duty, the same rea-

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son to disregard it, which the man has who is endeavouring to avoid the payment of money to the state? What, then, is required?—A *particular* statement of income, to guard against the evasion which was practised when a *general* statement was only required. What is it but the means of correcting those frauds which every man's observation but the honourable gentleman's had ascertained to be prevalent? The honourable gentleman speaks, too, of the surveyor's power to extract from the books of public bodies. Here the honourable gentleman, from not attending to the bill itself, is entirely mistaken. The surveyor has no such power; he is to make extracts from, and to have access to, the public books, to which at present even any person may easily procure access for any purpose, even of mere curiosity. Might not any body now procure information how much any mercantile house possesses in the three per cents? The surveyor, then, is authorized to suggest doubts, to collect information; but he has no right whatever to ask questions of the party surcharged, or to have any inspection of his books. Does not the honourable gentleman, however, perceive that all these points are proper subjects for consideration in a committee, where it is perfectly competent to move any alteration which gentlemen may think necessary?

As to the criterion of the general tax, it has likewise been objected to the details, that the application is unequal in respect to the nature of income, its duration, &c. Although I do not intend to enter so much into the discussion of the provisions of the bill, I am anxious to remove those erroneous conceptions which are entertained upon this subject. Here I cannot help remarking, that the arguments of the honourable gentleman, on this branch, suppose that it is necessary to correct the inequalities which distinguish the mode in which all taxes are imposed. If such be the sentiment of the honourable gentleman, his objection goes a great deal farther than the bill before the house. The inequalities of which he complains, arise out of the nature of society, and the distribution of its rank, and the classification of its property. If he attempts to remedy what he in this considers

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as urgent, he will attempt something which has never yet been done by any system of taxation, something which springs from theories of legislation, neither founded in wisdom nor justified by experience. I proceed to explain my meaning more fully. The honourable gentleman says, that if two persons have each 500*l.* per annum, one of which derives his income from land, the other from industry, they ought not to be both taxed equally at 50*l.* He assumes, that each having 450*l.* a year left, the impost is unequal. What does the new tax do? Are they not left in relation to each other precisely as they were before? The tax creates no new inequality. The justice or injustice remain precisely as they were. To complain of this inequality is to complain of the distribution of property; it is to complain of the constitution of society. To attempt to remedy it, would be to follow the example of that daring rabble of legislators in another country, from whom the honourable gentleman borrowed some of his political principles, and which, though he now reprobates, he still seems inclined to follow up. To think of taxing these two species of incomes in a different ratio, would be to attempt what the nature of society will not admit; what has never been practised in the course of four thousand years. But on what foundation does this principle, which the honourable gentleman has broached, rest? Where is the clear inequality on which he so vehemently insists? Is the industry of the artist, the manufacturer, the mechanic, less the creature of the protection of law, less involved in the great contest in which we are engaged, less likely to be overthrown in any disasters of the state, than the income which arises from land? I heard, with satisfaction, the argument of the honourable baronet* behind me, though I cannot, perhaps, go along with him to the extent to which he carried it; of this, certainly I am sure, that if all classes in this country are not strictly equal sharers in the advantages which the constitution of this country affords, there are none who ought not to contribute in proportion to their means for the public defence in a quarrel, in which the comforts and the hap-

* Sir William Young.

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piness of all are so deeply involved, unless when the compassion of the legislature forbears to extend the scale of taxation to those who are in the lowest class of income. The principle of the honourable gentleman then is entirely unfounded. In imputing to him that extravagant principle, which strikes at the whole distribution of property in society, I am sure I do nothing which his own arguments do not justify; nor do I think I am mistaken in stating those principles, for the honourable gentleman was particularly careful to repeat his monstrous propositions over and over again, in proportion as he saw that they were disgusting to the feelings of the house. That industry ought to be encouraged and promoted, is a sentiment which nobody will dispute. It should be remembered, however, that this, among many others, is a case in which virtue is its own reward. What, then, is the true state of the argument? An income of 500*l.* from land may be equal to about 15,000*l.* so that a man is contented to take three per cent. for his capital. In the funds, according to circumstances, and in the different funds, a man may have five, or even six per cent. If he lays out his capital in trade, and adds to it his own industry, he gets from 10 to 15 per cent. Now, if you leave the proportion undisturbed, what is it that forms the encouragement to lay out money in trade and manufactures, but the improved produce derived from industry? This is the incentive which enflames enterprise, and stimulates ingenuity. Allow that order, under which your commerce and your arts have risen to such an unexampled height of prosperity to remain undisturbed, and you preserve that incentive, that encouragement, and that reward, on which industry depends. I much doubt, indeed, whether any table which the honourable gentleman could form from all the new political lights which he ever received, could lay the foundation more secure or more permanent for arts, commerce, and every kind of exertion, than that on which they have grown so great, and flourished so long.

There is another argument of great authority, which gentlemen employ; an argument which, for some time past, I have seen much insisted upon in some of the newspapers—that this

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was a *tythe*, and that all tythes are unfavourable alike to industry. The argument has no application to the present case. The tenth, which this bill imposes, is a tenth of the clear profits after the expences of labour have been deducted. The more I have thought upon this particular subject and upon taxation in general, the more am I convinced not only of the futility, but the danger of any attempt, by the distribution of imposts, to make any difference in that order which the nature of society has already established. It is necessary to observe the arrangements which have been already formed, and to accommodate the proportion of taxes to the classes of property which have already been marked. To proceed beyond this, is to dissolve all established principles, and to overthrow the fabric of society which time and the progress of accumulation have reared.

Another curious inference may be drawn from the observations made against the hardships incurred by persons possessed of life estates, of temporary ones, and of those who receive the rewards of laborious employments. It happens singularly enough, that the public offices held under government, uniting in their nature profits derived from labour and temporary estates, are included in the operation of the bill. Now, Sir, these gentlemen who oppose it, have proposed on former occasions, as a great resource for the national expenditure, that all those offices should be made to contribute largely to the public service—I do not mean sinecures, for they wished to suppress them. The calculations furnished this night are not more exact than those of the honourable baronet on that occasion; the references certainly were not those of the board of agriculture, [a general laugh]; but the honourable baronet had made the prodigious discovery, that if all the public offices were placed on a reduced establishment, and others suppressed, the sum of ten millions would be saved to the public. I was highly pleased with the project, and sincerely wished for the execution of it; but I was always unfortunately stopped in every attempt I made to go on with it, but finding that the entire expenses of the public offices only amounted to one-tenth of the prodigious saving which

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was so confidently held out. The honourable baronet's attention has been taken up with agricultural studies and military tactics, or he might have known, that a committee appointed for the express purpose, had made a very different calculation. We have already had a committee of finance, which has discharged the important duties attached to it in the most satisfactory manner—a committee which, except that the honourable baronet was not a member of it, is perfectly to the mind of every gentleman in this house, and many of its suggestions for economy and regulation have been carried into effect with great advantage.—From this digression, however, into which I have been carried by the subject of offices, I now return.

I was stating with how little favour the honourable gentleman and his friends formerly considered annuities for life in the case of laborious offices; let us now see how their old opinions tally with their new, namely, this branch of income was most obnoxious to taxation, now it is to be most favoured. The honourable gentleman does not think that a great increase of taxes on consumption would be more advantageous than a general tax on all income. Is the inequality or the hardship greater now than it was, or than it would be, should taxes on consumption be increased? If not, then the honourable gentleman is only quarrelling with this tax, because it is not so unequal as the former mode of contribution had been. This plan, which is more general, more comprehensive, which embraces a great deal of property which formerly eluded taxation, and, by consequence, distributes the burden more fairly, is considered inadmissible. But I am told, that a large sum within the year cannot be raised by increasing the existing taxes on consumption. What is the consequence? Does not the honourable gentleman compel us to resort to the more expensive expedient of raising money by loans, instead of adopting a plan more extensive in its effect, while it provides for the redemption of what it is necessary to borrow, without that load of permanent taxes, which the funding system renders indispensable? But, it is said that a tax on capital is preferable. Was it not proved, however,

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that from the state of landed property, not more than one-third of it is now in the hands of persons who could be called upon to contribute, so that two-thirds would be placed wholly out of reach for any purpose of present exertion? What is the great object of the measure before the house? Is it not to raise within the year, from what constitutes the means of individuals within the year, such a proportion as is deemed necessary for the exigencies of the state, and the magnitude of the present crisis? Do you wish to avoid burdening the public with a loan? What advantage would you derive from it, however, if individuals mortgage their estates? Would not the aggregate of private loans encumber the mass of national wealth as much as if the nation contracted the obligation? The object then is to make the annual means of individuals applicable to a supply within the year.

It is objected still, that it is unjust that the man who has an annuity or an income, the fruit of his labour, should pay in the proportion of a man who has the same revenue from fixed property. This objection is altogether a fallacy. A permanent estate, which is represented as never dying, and, as it were, the property of a man after his death, contributes on every exigency which may occur; the income from labour and industry is extinguished; it contributes but once; it is no longer the property of the same person; while the other, which is considered as the same property, is subject to renewed demands. This reasoning may be thought refined; but the answer is justly applicable in the case where the reason, why fixed property should contribute more, is founded on its supposed permanency, in opposition to the fleeting character of the other. How then is it possible to discriminate between the various kinds of property? or to enter into the details which could alone enable you to apply any scale of exemption, without an investigation more oppressive, a disclosure more extensive, than any thing which the bill permits? How much safer is it to submit to those inequalities which are the lot of man, and which it is not the business, nor is it in the power, of schemes of finance to correct! Could we even in-

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dulge the wish to correct these inequalities, which arise out of the very nature of society, is this the legislative remedy? Let us then forbear to attempt what is perhaps beyond the power of human legislation to correct. It is an enterprise that would hurry us far beyond our depth, and lead to consequences far more extensive than we can foresee, and might produce an overthrow of all establishments, and all regular order, which it is impossible to contemplate without apprehension. The principle of argument that goes to remedy this supposed evil, belongs to the school of dangerous innovation which we ought not for moment to indulge. The consequence of this tax then will be, that whoever contributes a tenth of his income under this bill, will have a tenth less to spend, to save, or to accumulate. At the end of the war those who shall have contributed will be no poorer; they will only be to the extent of it less increased in riches than they would have been. The advantages of it are in a particular manner in favour of those on whom it will fall, instead of accumulating taxes on consumption, as it will bring all income to contribute more equally, and include a great deal of that which, in the hands of those who spend less than their income, escapes contribution altogether. Laying aside the proud idea of the vigour, permanence, and renewing energy which this measure secures, there is one case which, with a view to that class who are really willing to save for the benefit of those for whom they are bound to provide, makes some modification. It is in favour of those who have recourse to that easy, certain, and advantageous mode of providing for their families by insuring their lives. In this bill, as in the assessed taxes, a deduction is allowed for what is paid on this account.

Such is the general view of the merits of this important question. It is one which has engaged much of my serious attention, and I am far from presuming that it has already attained the perfection of which it is capable. The inequalities objected to it are not peculiar to its nature; they arise from our social state itself, and the correction of that order we cannot, as we ought not, attempt to alter. It would be a presumptuous attempt to

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derange the order of society, which would terminate in producing confusion, havock, and destruction, and with a derangement of property, terminate in the overthrow of civilised life.

The motion for the further consideration of the report was carried:

Ayes ------- 183
Noes ------- 17

January 23, 1799.

The House, pursuant to the order of the day, proceeded to take into consideration the following message from his Majesty relative to an Union between Great Britain and Ireland:

"GEORGE R.

"His Majesty is persuaded that the unremitting industry with which our enemies persevere in their avowed design of effecting the separation of Ireland from this kingdom, cannot fail to engage the particular attention of parliament; and his Majesty recommends it to this house to consider of the most effectual means of counteracting and finally defeating this design; and he trusts that a review of all the circumstances which have recently occurred (joined to the sentiment of mutual affection and common interest), will dispose the parliament of both kingdoms to provide, in the manner which they shall judge most expedient, for settling such complete and final adjustment as may best tend to improve and perpetuate a connexion essential for their common security, and to augment and consolidate the strength, power, and resources of the British empire. G. R."

After an address in the usual form had been moved by Mr. Dundas, and an amendment upon it by Mr. Sheridan, entreating his Majesty not to listen to the counsel of those who should advise an Union of the legislatures of the two kingdoms under the existing circumstances of the empire,

Mr. Pitt rose:

Sir,—Considering the manner in which this subject has been agitated, I feel that I ought to make an apology to the house for creating any delay in the determination of a point, upon which I really think much difference of opinion cannot subsist; I mean upon the vote to be given on the question which is now before us. But as this point, clear as in itself I take it to be, is connected with others on which depends the best interest of the

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whole of the British empire, I must ask the indulgence of the house, while I advert to the general principle of the subject which is now before us. It is far from being my intention to do now, what indeed could not now be regularly attempted, and what hereafter it will be my duty to do—I mean, to lay before this house a detailed particular of a plan, the spirit of which is only alluded to in general terms in the gracious communication from the throne to this house; that is what I shall have the honour of doing hereafter: the matter for the discussion of the house at this moment is comprised in the original motion of my right honourable friend*, and the amendment proposed by the right honourable gentleman†.

The address proposed in answer to the message, pledges the house to nothing more than that of assuring his Majesty, that you will take into your serious consideration a subject which is recommended to your care, and which is highly interesting to the welfare of the British empire. The amendment of the honourable gentleman calls upon you at once to declare, you will not deliberate upon the matter. The honourable gentleman produced one argument only in support of the conclusion he calls upon you to draw, and which he says he has established. He said, near the end of his speech, that which, if it were true, would indeed establish his conclusion. He has told you, that you have no legitimate power of making your deliberations effectual. He has told you, without much argument, what no other person has hitherto told this house in this house, but what has been told it and the public, upon whom by the way it is intended in the first instance to operate, in pamphlets and various other publications which are daily ushered forth in this country and in Ireland, that you have no legitimate power to determine upon this measure. The honourable gentleman adopts that doctrine. He has taken upon himself to deny the right of the parliament of either kingdom to determine upon this matter. I say the right of the parliament of either, for he cannot make any distinction between the two. If the parliament of Ireland

* Mr. Dundas. † Mr. Sheridan.

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has no just power or legitimate authority without the immediate instruction, not of its constituents merely, but of the people of Ireland in the mass,—I say, if the parliament of Ireland has not any legitimate authority to determine upon this subject without the instructions of the people at large, as little has the parliament of England such authority—as little had the parliament of Scotland that authority—as little had the parliament of England and Scotland that authority when they agreed upon the union between the two kingdoms—an union under which has grown up and flourished the prosperity of both; under which the laws of both have been improved; under which property has been protected; under which has been cherished a principle of cordial co-operation, which has led to the happiness of Great-Britain, and has rendered it the envy, and, I trust, will make it the protection of surrounding nations. You sit in that chair, Sir—I stand here before you—the honourable gentleman himself addressed you this night, called upon this house to entertain a debate, without any right whatever; we are all totally destitute of legitimate authority, if the honourable gentleman is right in the principle he contended for this night upon this part of the subject. Indeed if he be right in that principle, you have no parliament in England possessed of legal and just authority at this hour; there is no act which you have performed for the last ninety years, however well intended, or however effectual for the happiness of the people of Great Britain, that can be said to be legitimate or legal.

I know not what ideas the honourable gentleman may entertain, or what aid he expects, or what aid he will find ready to be given to his doctrine, that "parliament is not competent to the discussion of this subject." I know it leads immediately to the system of universal right of suffrage in the people; to the doctrine, that each man should have an actual share in the government of the country, by having a choice for his representative; and then goes back to the whole system of jacobinism, which I thought had been pretty nearly exploded as soon as it came to be pretty well understood all over Europe. I say, if

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the honourable gentleman avows this, then, but not till then, will his argument upon this head of the subject be intelligible and consistent; for without this, the whole of what he said upon the matter will be quite obscure, if not altogether without a meaning. The honourable gentleman, I believe, is not in his heart any advocate for any such doctrine; and yet to this length his argument leads, or there is an end of that part of the topic he brought before you. If you deny the competence of parliament which fully and freely represents all the people of this country, (and here let it be remembered that I am using no language of my own, but am following the approved language of our ancestors,) there is an end of all your authority, not in this point only, but in every other point. Now, let us see how this will apply to the argument of the honourable gentleman in the rest of his speech to-night. He complains that a question is agitated, and an address is moved upon this subject. The address is moved, as I said yesterday in this house it was intended to be moved, and it involves a question upon which I thought there would be no opposition.—Why? Because the detail of the matter would not now be brought forward. That is reserved for another opportunity; and however necessary the measure may be, and I am convinced it is, yet I know it has, and must have its difficulties. I know it is liable, necessarily liable, to a thousand difficulties, because subject to a thousand prejudices and partial objections; to sentiments hastily conceived by some, and eagerly adopted by others, to local and confined views, to personal affections, and to a multitude of impediments, which, however firm our own opinions may be of the indispensable necessity of the measure for the happiness, and even the security of the British empire, yet have induced his Majesty's ministers not to enter upon the detail at this moment. Upon these topics, therefore, I shall decline for the present entering upon any explanation. But although I do not think it right to detail the subject at this moment, and although I may have that honour at another time, yet I must say that the honourable gentleman's complaint against surprise is extremely ill founded. I think

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that if any complaint could fairly be urged against us upon that subject, it would be that we have shewn perhaps too much caution against surprise; and although (for the reasons I have alleged already) I shall decline at present entering upon any detail of the plan which is intended to be submitted to parliament, I must be allowed to answer the objections of the honourable gentleman. Here then let me again observe, that after a message comes from the throne, recommending in substance an union between the two kingdoms, nothing in the first instance is proposed but a general address, pledging the house to nothing more than that it will take the subject into serious consideration. A day is stated, on which the outline of the plan to be submitted to parliament is to be opened, that is the general principle of the measure. The discussion is further to be postponed, nor is it proposed that parliament shall be called upon to determine upon it until after due time has been taken for ample deliberation. I should have thought the honourable gentleman himself would have at least allowed there was candour and fairness in the mode of the proceeding.

If, therefore, the case be as I state it—if his Majesty has recommended the subject to your deliberation—if the address contains only a pledge that you will deliberate, the short question is—Should you now adopt the mode which those who have the honour of serving his Majesty presume to recommend to you gravely, and on which time will be given to deliberate on all its parts; or should you pronounce in the first instance, without examination, that it is a measure wholly unnecessary, or so dangerous, or impracticable, or so attended with evils, that you will not even so much as inquire into its contents, that you will at once shut the door against it? The honourable gentleman seems to think so. It is not enough for us to say we shall bring forward a proposition, involving in it the happiness of the whole of the British empire, including points requiring great attention, upon which we do not desire your immediate decision, but we desire you to tell the throne, in answer to its gracious communication, that you will consider the subject. The honourable

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gentleman says, No! you shall enter upon no enquiry upon the matter; I know enough of it already to convince you that you ought to reject it at once. If that be the proposition of the honourable gentleman, and so it is, I conceive that he is bound to make out that proposition to your satisfaction, in which case I conceive he is called upon to prove, either that the present state of Ireland is such that it requires no remedy whatever, or that if it does require a remedy, a better may be proposed than any which has an union for its basis, or that an union, at all events, must be such an evil that you ought not to deliberate upon it at all. This may be the opinion of the honourable gentleman, but has he stated any thing to make out the propriety of that opinion? For many years past I have heard from that honourable gentleman and his friends upon the affairs of Ireland nothing but complaints and lamentations. They have been in the constant habit of declaiming, sometimes upon the unjust and cruel, at other times upon the inefficient and defective system by which Ireland not only has been governed by the executive, but also by the deliberative powers of the country. We have often been reminded of the unfortunate distraction of all its parts of government, and of the evils which have resulted from the whole collectively; nay we have been told, and that pretty confidently from a gentleman who usually took the lead on the other side of this house, that the system by which Ireland was governed was radically defective; that indeed it was so full of deformity in its very constitution, as that, if we wished to answer the cavils of those who disputed the beauty of the constitution of Great Britain, we could not do better than desire them to look at her sister, who was so ugly, that when she was beheld, all objections against the other would vanish. I remember these things full well, Sir, and I know not how the honourable gentleman has forgotten them, and how he comes now to see none of these defects. How he comes all at once to be satisfied that this was an unjust picture of Ireland; how he comes to be all at once satisfied, that Ireland is as secure as she had need to be; that her government wants no remedy—is not for me, but for him to ex-

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plain to this house. The novelty of his praise of the parliament of Ireland is not to be suspected by me as an insincere compliment. He has certainly seen that parliament do much that deserved praise, but he has not seen enough to enable him to prove that the happiness of that country is perfectly secure; he has not seen enough to prove that there has not lately been there a desperate rebellion; he has not seen enough to prove that this house should conclude that the safety of that part of the British empire is at this moment perfectly secure; he has not seen enough to enable him to prove that there exist not at this hour in Ireland evils which we all deplore, and which we have much more reason to deplore than we had those which he has so repeatedly, and so vehemently, in conjunction with others, called to the attention of this house — I say the evils to which Ireland is at this moment exposed, and the still greater evils to which it may hereafter be exposed, if the wisdom of the legislature of the two countries does not prevent it. I say that Ireland is subject to great and deplorable evils, which have a deep root, for they lie in the situation of the country itself—in the present character, manners and habits of its inhabitants—in their want of intelligence, or, in other words, their ignorance—in the unavoidable separation between certain classes—in the state of property—in its religious distinctions—in the rancour which bigotry engenders and superstition rears and cherishes.

The honourable gentleman tells us these are evils which cannot be cured in a moment. I know they cannot, Sir, but the question is, whether we should not adopt some plan which may lead to that cure in the course of time? If indeed it could have been done by what that honourable gentleman and his friends have often recommended in this house, by what they call a catholic emancipation and a parliamentary reform, the task would have been a good deal easier than in truth it is; but catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform is a phrase made use of by some to cover designs of a very different nature. If such an object could be kept in view and be attained by calm, dispassionate, sober investigation, no man would be readier than my

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self to assent to any measure for that purpose. But if the state of society is such, that laws, however wise in themselves, will be ineffectual as to their object until the manners and customs of the people are altered—if men are in a state of poverty in which it is impossible they can have any comfort—if the progress of civilisation depends in a great measure upon the distribution of wealth—if the improvement of that wealth depends much upon the distribution of capital—if all the advantages to be derived from an increase of national wealth depend much upon the temper of the inhabitants—if those advantages, together with the still greater advantage of mental improvement, are all retarded by the distractions and divisions of party, by the blind zeal and phrenzy of religious prejudices, by old and furious family feuds —if all, I say, combine to make a country wretched, what is the remedy? An impartial legislature standing aloof from local party connexion, sufficiently removed from the influence of contending factions, to be advocate or champion of neither—being so placed as to have no superstitious reverence for the names and prejudices of ancient families, who have so long enjoyed the exclusive monopolies of certain public patronages and property, which custom has sanctioned, and which modern necessity may justify—a legislature who will neither give way to the haughty pretensions of a few, nor open the door to popular inroads, to clamour, or to invasion of all sacred forms and regularities, under the false and imposing colours of philosophical improvement in the art of government. This is the thing that is wanted for Ireland. Where is it to be found? In that country, where the evils which I have enumerated exist, or in this? That is to say, where should that legislature deliberate? In a place where the utmost effort of what is called patriotism amounts to nothing more than an aim at temporary popularity, as is evident from what has happened; or in a place where the discussion is calm and temperate? Certainly the latter, that is, in England. To neglect to establish such a legislature, when it is possible to do so, I say is an imprudence which nothing can justify. I say also, that much of the evil which Ireland now labours under,

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arises unavoidably from the condition of the parliament of that country.

One point at which I have just hinted, is the want of introduction of capital into that country. How can that be removed? By connexion and intercourse with Great Britain, which will improve the temper and manners, as well as the understandings of the people of Ireland: by a parliament that shall have no jealousies from local prejudices; this can only be the case when a parliament deliberates in England, and that, too, upon the interest of both countries united. I say it is upon this, and this only, that the happiness of the people of that country depends, and I say too, that, upon this view of the subject, the honourable gentleman, instead of opposing, should be led to support the measure before us, as being peculiarly adapted to meet evils, of which he as well as many of his friends have frequently complained. But he has not scrupled to tell us that he is astonished to hear, for the first time, that the final adjustment, as he calls it, which was made in the year 1782, has been found incompetent to the blessings it was intended to convey. What were the objects which were then in view? The independence of the legislature of that country most certainly; but I beg leave to add, that there was a resolution entered into in the Irish parliament, the substance of which is,—that the interests of Great Britain and Ireland are inseparable, that the connexion ought to be founded on a permanent and solid basis, and that Ireland would adopt such measures as should be consistent with its own internal tranquillity, for which its situation fits it, and as may be connected with the strength and stability of the whole of the British empire. Here then is a proof that something was left to be done after the legislature of Ireland gained its independence. This resolution was carried to the throne, but nothing was ever done upon it. What am I now proposing for the sake of Ireland? I am not content that Ireland shall have some benefits as part of the British empire; but I am proposing, that Ireland shall be allowed to participate of the blessings which at present England enjoys.

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It was said by the honourable gentleman, that this country had oppressed Ireland for three hundred years: that is not a point to which I assent: but I will say that for one hundred years this country has followed a very narrow policy with regard to that country. It manifested a very absurd jealousy concerning the growth, produce, and manufacture of several articles—I say that these jealousies will be buried by the plan which is now to be brought before you. I say that when you have two independent parliaments in one empire, you have no security for a continuance of their harmony and cordial co-operation. We all have in our mouths a sentence, that every good Englishman and good Irishman feels — We must stand or fall together — we should live and die together; and yet without such a measure as that which is about to be proposed to you, there can be no security for the continuance of that sentiment. I say the happiness of both countries ought to be perpetual: as it stands now, it is liable to a thousand accidents; it depends now upon the violence of the moment; it may be governed, as I have said already, upon views of temporary popularity, or upon the personal convenience of a few individuals, a tenure upon which the happiness of a nation ought never to depend. I am not stating these things without foundation, but am referring to what was done by two champions of parties in that country and in this, the one of whom* had a large pecuniary reward for his labours, and the other† was the subject of great panegyric in that country and in this. They were satisfied when the legislature of Ireland was declared independent of this country. True it is, that the parliament of that country was declared independent of this. It had what was supposed to be, sovereign power; it has the power of dictating to the executive authority upon the questions of war and peace, in the same controlling manner as the parliament of this country has: but what security is there that they will both agree upon all questions hereafter, in which the general interest of the British empire is involved? Is it a difficult thing to suppose a case in which they may clash, and become perhaps as hostile to one

* Mr. Grattan. † Mr. Fox.

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another as any two independent bodies politic in Europe? I have no difficulty in saying that such a case might possibly happen, nor do I think that much was gained by the declaration of the independence of that parliament, or ever will be gained to the British empire, until there is some security that both legislatures will go on harmoniously together upon all questions in which the general interests of the British empire are involved. Neither do I much admire the philosophy of that person who thinks he has completed a beautiful new fabric when he has only completed the destruction of an old one; who calls that destruction "the most stupendous pile of human wisdom that ever was exhibited to the world." When I find such a man, after the act was passed which declared the independence of the Irish parliament, assenting to the principle of a resolution of a committee, stating that the connexion between the two countries should be established by mutual consent on a solid and permanent basis, and when I find that such a resolution was carried to the throne, as I have said already, and when I reflect that nothing was afterwards done upon that resolution to carry it into effect, I have the authority of that person and his friends, that what was done in declaring the parliament of Ireland independent, was defective in a point which is indispensable for the happiness of the people of Ireland, and indeed of both countries. I think then I may say that the *onus* is upon those who oppose the measure now before us to shew its bad tendency, rather than upon us to shew its probable good effect, for their own conduct proclaims the absolute necessity of something being done; it is incumbent upon all those who took a part in the discussion of that subject, and who approved of the measure—the childish measure of the independence of the parliament of Ireland!—without any security that the parliament of that country and of this would never differ essentially upon any point in which the happiness of the British empire may be involved, to shew it, and upon the honourable gentleman who moved this amendment, as much as any one, for he took an active share in the parliamentary proceedings to which I have just alluded.

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How stands the case in point of experience? Is there a probability, or is there not, that the parliaments of the two countries may differ upon a point that may be essentially interesting to the British empire? I say you have a guide upon that subject. You may profit by experience—I mean by the case of the *regency*. The honourable gentleman says that there was no difference between the two parliaments as to the regent. Why, no, Sir, there was no difference as to the *person* who was to be regent; but there was an essential difference as to the *principle* on which that person was to be regent; the Irish parliament decided on one principle, the English parliament on another, and their having agreed on the person was accidental; and upon the distinct principles on which the two parliaments proceeded, they might as well have differed upon the person who was to be, as on the powers to be granted to, the regent. Now let any man tell me that this is not an instance of an essential difference upon a point that was essential to the welfare of the British empire: and let any man shew me what security there is that an essential difference upon some other object may not hereafter occur between the two parliaments. That they have not hitherto differed in the great and momentous events which have been agitated before parliament, is a good fortune which has arisen from one general cause, that of all descriptions of persons having united against one common enemy, with the exception only of a few, whose counsels, happily for both countries, and for the civilized part of the world, have lost all their influence. But will any man tell me, that such difference as was manifested in the time of the regency will never occur again? Will any man tell me, when we come to treat of peace, for instance, or to consider any subject of alliance with any foreign power, or upon any question of trade or commerce, that then the local prejudices, I say prejudices, for they have great influence, may not occasion a difference between the legislatures upon points that may be essential to the welfare of the British empire? No matter what the cause of the difference may be, it is enough that there may be such a difference. A party in England may give to the throne one species of advice by its

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parliament; a party in Ireland may advise directly opposite, upon the most essential points that involve the safety of both —upon alliance with a foreign power, for instance; upon the army; upon the navy; upon any branch of the public service; upon trade; upon commerce; or, upon any point that might be essential to the empire at large. Let any man tell me, what would have been the consequence to both England and Ireland, had the dissensions in Ireland been the same in point of force against the executive government in parliament, since the commencement of the present war, as they were at the time the Irish propositions were rejected? Had these men who were at the head of opposition either in that country or in this, possessed the confidence of any considerable part of the public, will any man tell me, that any minister would have been able to save this country or Ireland from destruction? But happily for us, happily for every part of the civilized world, the iniquity of the common enemy united us all; else all the evils which I have already stated, together with the poison of jacobinism, would have come upon us, and such a complication would have soon completed the ruin of our empire; but fortunately, I say, the counsels of those who favoured such principles were rejected with disdain by the good sense of mankind at large. But when that cement by which the two legislatures have been held together, shall cease to operate, what security is there for the continuance of cordial co-operation? None whatever: the probability of its continuance is more than doubtful; for I do say, for the reasons I have alleged already, that the present state of society in Ireland, as well as its representation, which partakes of the nature of that society, is radically defective.

I am aware, Sir, that I have spoken at a greater length on this subject than might have been expected in its present stage. I have thought a great deal upon this subject, and what I have said has been nothing but the result of my own observations. I am bound to convey to this house every information which it may be in my power to give; but however acceptable to the one or to the other side of the house, however acceptable or otherwise

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to those whom I respect on the other side the water, my sentiments upon this subject may be, my duty compels me to speak them freely. I see the case so plainly, and I feel it so strongly, that there is no circumstance of apparent or probable difficulty, no apprehension of popularity, no fear of toil or labour, that shall prevent me from using every exertion which remains in my power to accomplish the work that is now before us, and on which I am persuaded depend the internal tranquillity of Ireland, the interest of the British empire at large, and, I hope, I may add, the happiness of a great part of the habitable world.

The amendment was negatived without a division, and the motion for the address was then put and carried.

January 31, 1799.

THE order of the day being read for taking into further consideration his Majesty's message relative to an Union between Great Britain and Ireland,

"GEORGE R.

"His Majesty is persuaded that the unremitting industry with which our enemies persevere in their avowed design of effecting the separation of Ireland from this kingdom, cannot fail to engage the particular attention of parliament; and his Majesty recommends it to this House to consider of the most effectual means of counteracting, and finally defeating this design; and he trusts that a review of all the circumstances which have recently occurred (joined to the sentiment of mutual affection and common interest) will dispose the parliaments of both kingdoms to provide in the manner which they shall judge most expedient, for settling such a complete and final adjustment as may best tend to improve and perpetuate a connexion essential for their common security, and to augment and consolidate the strength, power, and resources, of the British empire;— G. R."

Mr. PITT rose, and spoke as follows:

Sir—When I proposed to this house, the last time this subject was before them, to fix this day for the further consideration of his Majesty's message, I certainly indulged the hope that the result of a similar communication to the parliament of Ireland, would have opened a more favourable prospect than at pre-

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sent exists, of the speedy accomplishment of a measure which I then stated, and which I still consider, to be of the greatest importance to the power, the stability, and the general welfare of the empire; to the immediate interests of both kingdoms, and more particularly to the peace, the tranquillity, and the safety of Ireland: in this hope, I am sorry to say, I have for the present been disappointed, by the proceedings of the Irish house of commons, of which we have been informed since this subject was last under consideration.

I feel and know that the parliament of Ireland possesses the power, the entire competence, on the behalf of that country, alike to accept or reject a proposition of this nature—a power which I am by no means inclined to dispute. I see that at the present moment one house of parliament in Ireland has expressed a repugnance even to the consideration of this measure. Feeling, Sir, as I have already stated, that it is important, not only as it tends to the general prosperity of the empire of Great Britain, but (what, under every situation, must always be to me an object of the greatest moment) feeling that it was designed and calculated to increase the prosperity and ensure the safety of Ireland, I must have seen with the deepest regret, that, at the very first moment, and before the nature of the measure could be known, it was so received.

But whatever may have been my feelings upon this subject, knowing that it is the undoubted right of the legislature of Ireland to reject or to adopt such measures as may appear to them injurious or beneficial, far be it from me to speak of its determination in any other terms but those of respect. Let it not, therefore, be imagined that I am inclined to press any sentiment, however calculated it may appear to me to benefit every member of the empire, in any manner which may lead to hostile discussion between two kingdoms, whose mutual happiness and safety depend upon their being strictly and cordially united. But while I admit and respect the rights of the parliament of Ireland, I feel that, as a member of the parliament of Great Britain, I also have a right to exercise, and a duty to perform.

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That duty is to express, as distinctly as I can, the general nature and outline of the plan, which, in my conscience, I think would tend in the strongest manner to ensure the safety and the happiness of both kingdoms.

While I feel, therefore, that as long as the house of commons of Ireland view the subject in the light they do at present, there is no chance of its adoption, I do not think that I ought on that account to abstain from submitting it to the consideration of this parliament; on the contrary, I think it only the more necessary to explain distinctly the principles of the measure, and to state the grounds upon which it appears to me to be entitled to the approbation of the legislature.

If parliament, when it is in possession of the basis upon which this plan is founded, and of its general outline, should be of opinion with me, that it is founded upon fair, just, and equitable principles, calculated to produce mutual advantages to the two kingdoms—if parliament, I say, upon full explanation, and after mature deliberation, should be of that opinion, I should propose that its determination should remain recorded as that by which the parliament of Great Britain is ready to abide, leaving to the legislature of Ireland to reject or to adopt it hereafter, upon a full consideration of the subject.

There is no man who will deny, that, in a great question of this nature, involving in it objects which, in the first instance, are more likely to be decided upon by passion than by judgment;—in a question in which an honest, but, I must be allowed to say, a mistaken sense of national pride is so likely to operate, much misconstruction and misconception must inevitably happen. It therefore becomes the more necessary that the intentions of the government which proposes the measure, and the principles of the measure itself, should be distinctly understood. But, Sir, in stating that intention and those principles, I look to something more than a mere vindication of government for having proposed the measure. I do entertain a confidence, even under the apparent discouragement of the opinion expressed by the Irish house of commons, that this measure is founded upon such clear, such

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demonstrable grounds of utility, is so calculated to add to the strength and power of the empire (in which the safety of Ireland is included, and from which it never can be separated), and is attended with so many advantages to Ireland in particular, that all that can be necessary for its ultimate adoption is, that it should be stated distinctly, temperately, and fully, and that it should be left to the unprejudiced, the dispassionate, the sober judgment of the parliament of Ireland. I wish that those whose interests are involved in this measure, should have time for its consideration — I wish that time should be given to the landed, to the mercantile, and manufacturing interest, that they should look at it in all its bearings, and that they should coolly examine and sift the popular arguments by which it has been opposed, and that then they should give their deliberate and final judgment.

I am the more encouraged in this hope of the ultimate success of this measure, when I see, notwithstanding all the prejudices which it has excited, that barely more than one half of the members that attended the house of commons were adverse to it; and that in the other house of parliament in Ireland, containing, as it does, so large a portion of the property of that kingdom, it was approved of by a large majority. When I have reason to believe that the sentiments of a large part of the people of that country are favourable to it, and that much of the manufacturing, and of the commercial interest of Ireland, are already sensible how much it is calculated to promote their advantage, I think, when it is more deliberately examined, and when it is seen in what temper it is here proposed and discussed, that it will still terminate in that which can alone be a fortunate result.

It would be vain indeed to hope that a proposition upon which prejudices are so likely to operate, and which is so liable to misconception, should be unanimously approved. But the approbation I hope for is that of the parliament of Ireland, and of the intelligent part of the public of that country. It is with a view to this object that I think it my duty to bring this measure for-

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ward at present; not for the sake of urging its immediate adoption, but that it may be known and recorded; that the intention of the British parliament may be known, in the hope that it will produce similar sentiments among our countrymen in Ireland. With this view, it is my intention not to go at present into any detailed statement of the plan, because, should it ultimately be adopted, the minuter parts must necessarily become the objects of much distinct discussion; but to give such a general statement of the nature of the measure, as will enable the house to form a correct judgment upon it.

I shall therefore, Sir, before I sit down, open to the house a string of resolutions, comprising the general heads of this plan. It will be necessary for me, for the purpose of discussing those resolutions with regularity and convenience, to move that the house should resolve itself into a committee. And I have already stated, that it is not my intention then to press the committee to come to an immediate decision upon the resolutions; but if, upon full and deliberate examination, the resolutions which I shall have the honour to propose, and which contain as much as is necessary for an outline of the plan, shall be approved, my opinion is, that nothing can contribute more to obviate any doubts and dissatisfaction which may exist, than that parliament should adopt those resolutions, and that it should then humbly lay them at the foot of the throne, leaving it to his Majesty's wisdom to communicate them to the parliament of Ireland, whenever circumstances should appear favourable to such a measure. I shall therefore, Sir, proceed as shortly as I can to state to the house the nature of the resolutions, and of the address which I shall propose to accompany them, if it should be the pleasure of the house to adopt them.

Having now, Sir, explained to the house the mode I mean to pursue, and my reasons for persisting, under the present circumstances, in submitting this measure to the consideration of parliament, I will endeavour to state the general grounds on which it rests, the general arguments by which it is recommended, and to give a short view of the outline of the plan.

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As to the general principle upon which the whole of this measure is founded, I am happy to observe, from what passed upon a former occasion, that there is not a probability of any difference of opinion. The general principle, to which both sides of the house perfectly acceded, is, that a perpetual connexion between Great Britain and Ireland is essential to the interests of both. The only honourable gentleman who, when this subject was before the house on a former day, opposed the consideration of the plan altogether, stated, in terms as strong as I could wish, the necessity of preserving the strictest connexion between the two countries. I most cordially agree with him in that opinion; but I then stated, that I do not barely wish for the maintenance of that connexion, as tending to add to the general strength of the empire, but I wish for the maintenance of it with a peculiar regard to the local interests of Ireland, with a regard to every thing that can give to Ireland its due weight and importance, as a great member of the empire. I wish for it with a view of giving to that country the means of improving all its great natural resources, and of giving it a full participation of all those blessings which this country so eminently enjoys.

Considering the subject in this point of view, and assuming it as a proposition not to be controverted, that it is the duty of those who wish to promote the interest and prosperity of both countries, to maintain the strongest connexion between them, let me ask, what is the situation of affairs that has called us to the discussion of this subject? This very connexion, the necessity of which has been admitted on all hands, has been attacked by foreign enemies, and by domestic traitors. The dissolution of this connexion is the great object of the hostility of the common enemies of both countries; it is almost the only remaining hope with which they now continue the contest. Baffled and defeated as they have hitherto been, they still retain the hope, they are still meditating attempts, to dissolve that connexion. In how many instances already the defeat of their hostile designs has been turned to the confirmation of our strength and security, I need not enumerate. God grant that in this instance the same

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favour of Divine Providence, which has in so many instances protected this empire, may again interpose in our favour, and that the attempts of the enemy to separate the two countries, may tend ultimately to knit them more closely together, to strengthen a connexion, the best pledge for the happiness of both, and so add to that power which forms the chief barrier to the civilized world, against the destructive principles, the dangerous projects, and the unexampled usurpation of France! This connexion has been attacked not only by the avowed enemies of both countries, but by internal treason, acting in concert with the designs of the enemy—internal treason, which ingrafted jacobinism on those diseases which necessarily grew out of the state and condition of Ireland.

Thinking, then, as we all must think, that a close connexion with Ireland is essential to the interests of both countries, and seeing how much this connexion is attacked, let it not be insinuated that it is unnecessary, much less improper, at this arduous and important crisis, to see whether some new arrangements, some fundamantal regulations, are not necessary, to guard against the threatened danger. The foreign and domestic enemies of these kingdoms have shewn, that they think this the vulnerable point in which we may be most successfully attacked: let us derive advantage, if we can, from the hostility of our enemies; let us profit by the designs of those who, if their conduct displays no true wisdom, at least possess in an eminent degree that species of wisdom which is calculated for the promotion of mischief. They know upon what footing that connexion rests at this moment between the two countries, and they feel the most ardent hope, that the two parliaments will be infatuated enough not to render their designs abortive, by fixing that connexion upon a more solid basis.

These circumstances, I am sure, will not be denied. And if upon other grounds we had any doubt, these circumstances alone ought to induce us, deliberately and dispassionately, to review the situation of the two countries, and to endeavour to find out a proper remedy for an evil, the existence of which is but too

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apparent. It requires but a moment's reflection, for any man who has marked the progress of events, to decide upon the true state and character of this connexion. It is evidently one which does not afford that security which, even in times less dangerous and less critical than the present, would have been necessary, to enable the empire to avail itself of its strength and its resources.

When I last addressed the house on this subject, I stated that the settlement, which was made in 1782, so far from deserving the name of a final adjustment, was one that left the connexion between Great Britain and Ireland exposed to all the attacks of party, and all the effects of accident. That settlement consisted in the demolition of the system which before held the two countries together. Let me not be understood as expressing any regret at the termination of that system. I disapproved of it, because I thought it was one unworthy the liberality of Great Britain, and injurious to the interests of Ireland. But to call that a system in itself—to call that a glorious fabric of human wisdom, which is no more than the mere demolition of another system, is a perversion of terms which, however prevalent of late, can only be the effect of gross misconception, or of great hypocrisy.

We boast that we have done every thing, when we have merely destroyed all that before existed, without substituting any thing in its place. Such was the *final adjustment* of 1782; and I can prove it to be so, not only from the plainest reasoning, but I can prove it by the opinion expressed by the British parliament at that very time. I can prove it by the opinion expressed by those very ministers by whom it was proposed and conducted. I can prove it by the opinion of that very government who boast of having effected a final adjustment. I refer for what I have said to proofs which they will find it very difficult to answer—I mean their own acts, which will plainly shew that they were of opinion that a new system would be necessary.

But, Sir, I will go farther—I will also produce the authority of one of those whose influence, on the present occasion, has

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been peculiarly exerted to prevent the discussion of the question in Ireland—of one, of whom I do not wish to speak but with respect, but for whom, nevertheless, I should convey an idea of more respect than I can now feel to be due to him, if I were merely to describe him as the person who fills the same situation, in the house of commons of Ireland, which you, Sir, hold among us, and of which, on all occasions, *you* discharge the duties with a dignity and impartiality which reflects so much credit on yourself, and so well supports the character and authority of the house.

On a former night, I read an extract from the journals, to shew what was the opinion even of those by whom the final adjustment was proposed on that measure. It would there appear, that the message was sent to the parliament of Ireland, recommending to them the adoption of some plan for a final adjustment between the two countries, and wishing to know what were the grounds of the grievances of which they complained. In answer to this message, the parliament of Ireland stated certain grievances, the principal of which was, the power claimed by the parliament of Great Britain of making laws to bind Ireland; but, with respect to that part of the message which related to the propriety of adopting some measures for a final adjustment between the two countries, they were wholly silent. This address was laid before the parliament of Great Britain, to whom a similar message had been previously sent, and on that ground was moved the repeal of what was called the declaratory act; which motion was assented to by the British parliament. This satisfaction was complete in Ireland, as far as related to the grievance of which her parliament had complained, viz. the power of the British parliament of making laws for Ireland, because, by the repeal of the declaratory act, that power was given up. But so far was the minister of that day from considering that the repeal of that law finally terminated all differences, and established the connexion between the two countries upon a solid basis, that he thought it necessary to move that a farther settle-

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ment was indispensable for the maintenance of that connexion. [Mr. Sheridan across the table, desired that that part of the journals to which Mr. Pitt alluded, might be read.] Sir, I have stated the substance of the journals correctly; they were read on a former night, and the honourable gentleman may, if he chooses, have them read again; if he does, he will find that they fully justify the statement I have made; but I beg that at present I may not be interrupted. I do maintain, that, upon a reference to the journals of the period to which I have alluded, it will appear that a farther agreement between Great Britain and Ireland is there stated, in the opinion of the administration of the day, to be absolutely necessary.

I beg farther to state, that after the motion for the bill, of which so much has been said, was passed, an address to his Majesty was moved and carried, praying him to take such further measures as to him seemed proper, to strengthen the connexion between the two countries. His Majesty's most gracious answer, stating that, in compliance with the address, he would immediately take such measures as might be necessary for that purpose, was delivered to the house by an honourable gentleman * who then filled the office of secretary of state, and whom we have not lately seen in the house, though he still continues to be a member of it. I do assert, without the least fear of contradiction from any gentleman whatever, that it was in the contemplation of the government of that day, to adopt some measures of the nature alluded to in the address; since that period, however, no such measure has been taken. I do also maintain, that that very system which by these very ministers who brought it forward was found to be imperfect, even for the purpose of maintaining the connexion between the two countries, remains at this moment in the same imperfect state. It leaves the two countries with separate and independent legislatures, connected only with this tie, that the third estate in both countries is the same—that the executive government is the

* Mr. Fox.

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same—that the crown exercises its power of assenting to Irish acts of parliament, under the great seal of Great Britain, and by the advice of British ministers.

This is the only principle of connexion which is left by the final adjustment of 1782. Whether this is a sufficient tie to unite them in time of peace; whether in time of war it is sufficient to consolidate their strength against a common enemy; whether it is sufficient to guard againt those local jealousies which must necessarily sometimes exist between countries so connected; whether it is calculated to give to Ireland all the important commercial and political advantages which she would derive from a closer connexion with Great Britain; whether it can give to both nations that degree of strength and prosperity which must be the result of such a measure as the present, I believe needs only to be stated to be decided.

But I have already said, that I have, upon this point, the authority of an opinion to which I before alluded—an opinion delivered upon a very important measure, very soon after the final adjustment of 1782. The measure to which I refer, was that of the commercial propositions which were brought forward in 1785. I am not now going to enter into a discussion of the merits of that measure. The best, perhaps, that can be said of it is, that it went as far as circumstances would then permit, to draw the two countries to a closer connexion. But those who think that the adjustment of 1782 was final, and that it contained all that was necessary for the establishment of the connexion between the two countries upon a firm basis, can hardly contend that the commercial propositions of 1785 were necessary to prevent the danger of separation between the two countries, and to prevent the conflicting operation of independent legislatures. Yet, if I am not mistaken, there will be found, upon a reference to better records than those in which parliamentary debates are usually stated (I mean a statement of what passed in the discussion upon those propositions fourteen years ago, made, as I have understood, by some of the principal parties themselves), that the

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chancellor of the exchequer of that day in Ireland*, in a debate upon the Irish propositions, held this language:—"If this infatuated country gives up the present offer, she may look for it again in vain." Here the right honourable gentleman was happily mistaken; Ireland has again had the offer of the same advantages, but more complete, and in all respects better calculated to attain their object; and this offer the right honourable gentleman has exerted all his influence to reject. But he goes on to say—"*things cannot remain as they are*—Commercial jealousy is roused—it will increase with *two independent legislatures*—and without an united interest in commerce, in a commercial empire, political union will receive many shocks, and *separation of interest* must threaten *separation of connexion*, which every *honest Irishman* must shudder to look at, as a possible event."

Gentlemen will have the goodness to observe, that I am not now quoting these expressions as pledges given by that right honourable gentleman that he would support a proposal for an union between the two countries; but I am adducing them to prove, that the situation of the two countries after the final adjustment of 1782 was such, in his opinion, as led to the danger of a separation between them. I am not now arguing, that a legislative union is the only measure which can possibly be adopted; but I am contending, that the adjustment of 1782 was never considered as final, by those who now state it to be so, as an argument against the consideration of the present measure. How the honourable gentleman on the other side of the house will evade this authority I do not know—an authority too, which, I must observe, he seems much more inclined to treat with respect than he was formerly.

But, Sir, it does not stop there. What is the evil to which he alludes? Commercial jealousies between two countries acting upon the laws of two independent legislatures, and the danger of those legislatures acting in opposition to each other. How can this evil be remedied? By two means only; either by some com-

* Mr. Foster.

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pact entered into by the legislatures of the two countries respecting the mode of forming their commercial regulations, or else by blending the two legislatures together; these are the only two means. I defy the wit of man to point out a third. The mode of compact was proposed in 1785; but unfortunately, in spite of that right honourable gentleman's eloquence and authority, who then stated the importance of guarding against the evil, it so happened that doctrines, derived chiefly from this side of the water, succeeded in convincing the parliament of Ireland, that it would be inconsistent with their independence, to enter into any compact whatever. We have then the authority of that right honourable gentleman to whom I have so often alluded, that the unsettled state in which the matter was left, would give "political union many shocks, and lead to a separation of connexion." The experiment of a mutual compact has been tried without success; the arrangement of that sort, which was proposed in 1785, in order to obviate the inconveniencies stated by the right honourable gentleman, was then attacked with the same success against his authority, as another and more effectual remedy has recently experienced under his auspices. The result then is, you must remain in the state which that right honourable gentleman has described, with the seeds of separation in the system now established, and with the connexion, on which the mutual prosperity of both countries depends, in danger of being hourly dissolved, or you must again recur to the proposal of a compact similar to that rejected in 1785, or you must resort to the best and most effectual remedy—*a legislative union.*

I have dwelt longer, perhaps, upon this part of the subject, than was absolutely necessary, because, I believe there is scarcely any man who has ever asked himself, whether there is a solid, permanent system of connexion between the two countries, who could, upon reflection, answer the question in the affirmative. But besides the authorities of the persons who made the arrangement in 1782, and of those who have since treated of it, to shew that it was not deemed to be final and complete, I have further the test of experience to shew how imperfect it was, and how in-

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adequate in practice to the great object of cementing the connexion, and placing it beyond the danger of being dissolved. In the single instance which has occurred, (and that a melancholy one which all of us deplored,) in which we could feel the effects of two jarring legislatures, we did feel it. On that occasion, it might have produced the most signal calamities, had we not been rescued from its danger by an event, to which no man can now look back without feeling the utmost joy and exultation; feelings, which subsequent circumstances have served to heighten and confirm. Every gentleman will know, that I must allude to the regency. With two independent legislatures, acting upon different principles, it was accident alone that preserved the identity of the executive power, which is the bond and security of the connexion: and even then the executive authority, though vested in one person, would have been held by two different tenures, by one tenure in England, by another in Ireland, had not the interposition of Providence prevented a circumstance pregnant with the most imminent perils, and which might have operated to a separation of the two kingdoms.

After seeing the recorded opinion of parliament, of those who made the arrangement of 1782, and after the decided testimony of experience on the subject, within the short period of sixteen years, perhaps it is hardly necessary to appeal to farther proofs of its inadequacy, or to desire gentlemen to look forward to possible cases, which I could easily put, and which will naturally suggest themselves to the minds of all, who choose to turn their attention to the subject.

But when we consider the distinct powers possessed by the two legislatures on all the great questions of peace and war, of alliances and confederacies, (for they each have in principle a right to discuss them and decide upon them, though one of them has hitherto been wisely restrained by discretion from the exercise of that right,) have we not seen circumstances to induce us to think it possible, at least, that on some of these important questions the opinions and decisions of the two parliaments might have been at variance? Are we talking of an indissoluble con-

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nexion, when we see it thus perpetually liable to be endangered? Can we really think that the interests of the empire, or of its different branches, rest upon a safe and solid basis at present? I am anxious to discuss this point closely with any man, either here, or in Ireland. Will it be said, that the parliament of the latter country is bound by our decision on the question of peace or war? And if not so bound, will any man, looking at human nature as it is, contend, that there is a sufficient certainty that the decision on that important subject will always be the same in both countries? I should be glad to receive a distinct answer to this question from the honourable gentleman, who has declared himself to be as warm a friend to the connexion between the two countries, as I am.

Suppose, for instance, that the present war, which the parliament of Great Britain considers to be just and necessary, had been voted by the Irish parliament to be unjust, unnecessary, extravagant, and hostile to the principles of humanity and freedom. Would that parliament have been bound by this country? If not, what security have we, at a moment the most important to our common interest and common salvation, that the two kingdoms should have but one friend and one foe? I repeat it; I am eager to hear what can be said in justification of a basis so imperfect and unsound, and liable to be shaken by so many accidents. I have already observed that in the peculiar circumstances of the present moment, we may find stronger reasons to prove the necessity of correcting the system of connexion between this country and Ireland, of supplying its imperfections, and strengthening its weakness, than are to be found at any former period.

Having thus stated, Sir, and I think sufficiently proved, that the settlement of 1782, in every point of view in which it can be considered, is imperfect, and inadequate to the object of maintaining the connexion between the two kingdoms, I proceed next to the circumstances which peculiarly call upon us at the present moment to remedy that imperfection.

This country is at this time engaged in the most important, and

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momentous conflict that ever occurred in the history of the world; a conflict in which Great Britain is distinguished for having made the only manly and successful stand against the common enemies of civilized society. We see the point in which that enemy thinks us the most assailable. Are we not then bound in policy and prudence to strengthen that vulnerable point, involved as we are in a contest of liberty against despotism—of property against plunder and rapine—of religion and order against impiety and anarchy? There was a time when this would have been termed declamation; but, unfortunately, long and bitter experience has taught us to feel that it is only the feeble and imperfect representation of those calamities (the result of French principles and French arms), which are every day attested by the wounds of a bleeding world.

Is there a man who does not admit the importance of a measure which, at such a crisis, may augment the strength of the empire, and thereby ensure its safety? Would not that benefit to Ireland be of itself so solid, so inestimable, that, in comparison with it, all commercial interests, and the preservation of local habits and manners, would be trifling, even if they were endangered by the present measure, which they undoubtedly are not? The people of Ireland are proud, I believe, of being associated with us in the great contest in which we are engaged, and must feel the advantage of augmenting the general force of the empire. That the present measure is calculated to produce that effect, is a proposition which, I think, cannot be disputed. There is not in any court of Europe a statesman so ill informed as not to know, that the general power of the empire would be increased to a very great extent indeed, by such a consolidation of the strength of the two kingdoms. In the course of the century every writer of any information on the subject has held the same language, and in the general strength of the empire both kingdoms are more concerned than in any particular interests which may belong to either. If we were to ask the ministers of our allies, what measure they thought the most likely to augment the power of the British empire, and consequently increase that strength by which

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they were now protected—if we were to ask the agent of our enemies, what measure would be the most likely to render their designs abortive, the answer would be the same in both cases, viz. the firm consolidation of every part of the empire.

There is another consideration well worth attention. Recollect what are the peculiar means by which we have been enabled to resist the unequalled and eccentric efforts of France, without any diminution, nay, with an increase, of our general prosperity—what, but the great commercial resources which we possess? A measure, then, which must communicate to such a mighty limb of the empire as Ireland all the commercial advantages which Great Britain possesses, which will open the markets of the one country to the other, which will give them both the common use of their capital, must, by diffusing a large portion of wealth into Ireland, considerably increase the resources, and consequently the strength of the whole empire.

But it is not merely in this general view, that I think the question ought to be considered. We ought to look to it with a view peculiarly to the permanent interest and security of Ireland. When that country was threatened with the double danger of hostile attacks by enemies without, and of treason within, from what quarter did she derive the means of her deliverance? —from the naval force of Great Britain—from the voluntary exertions of her military of every description, not called for by law—and from her pecuniary resources, added to the loyalty and energy of the inhabitants of Ireland itself; of which it is impossible to speak with too much praise, and which shews how well they deserve to be called the brethren of Britons. Their own courage might, perhaps, have ultimately succeeded in repelling the dangers by which they were threatened, but it would have been after a long contest, and after having waded through seas of blood. Are we sure that the same ready and effectual assistance which we have happily afforded, on the present occasion, will be always equally within our power? Great Britain has always felt a common interest in the safety of Ireland; but that common interest was never so obvious and urgent as when the

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common enemy made her attack upon Great Britain, through the medium of Ireland, and when their attack upon Ireland went to deprive her of her connexion with Great Britain, and to substitute in its stead the new government of the French republic. When that danger threatened Ireland, the purse of Great Britain was as open for the wants of Ireland, as for the necessities of England.

I do not, Sir, state these circumstances, as upbraiding Ireland for the benefits we have conferred; far from it; but I state them with pleasure, as shewing the friendship and good-will with which this country has acted towards her. But if struggles of this sort may and must return again; if the worst dangers are those which are yet to come, dangers which must be greater from being more disguised; if those situations may arise when the same means of relief are not in our power, what is the remedy that reason and policy point out? It is to identify them with us; it is to make them a part of the same community, by giving them a full share of those accumulated blessings which are diffused throughout Great Britain; it is, in a word, by giving them a full participation of the wealth, the power, and the stability of the British empire. If then this measure comes recommended not only by the obvious defects of the system which now exists, but that it has also the pre-eminent recommendation of increasing the general power of the empire, and of guarding against future danger from the common enemy, we are next to consider it as to its effects upon the internal condition of Ireland.

I know perfectly well, that, as long as Ireland is separated from Great Britain, any attempt on our part to provide measures which we might think salutary, as respecting questions of contending sects or parties, of the claimed rights of the catholics, or of the precautions necessary for the security of the protestants—I know that all these, though they may have been brought forward by the very persons who are the advocates of the final adjustment in 1782, were, in fact, attacks upon the independence of the Irish parliament, and attempts to usurp the right of deciding on points which can only be brought within our province

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by compact. Until the kingdoms are united, any attempt to make regulations here for the internal state of Ireland must certainly be a violation of her independence. But feeling as I do for their interests and their welfare, I cannot be inattentive to the events that are passing before me; I must therefore repeat, that whoever looks at the circumstances to which I have alluded; whoever considers that the enemy have shewn by their conduct, that they considered Ireland as the weakest and most vulnerable part of the empire; whoever reflects upon those dreadful and inexcusable cruelties instigated by the enemies of both countries, and upon those lamentable severities by which the exertions for the defence of Ireland were unhappily, but unavoidably, attended, and the necessity of which is itself one great aggravation of the crimes and treasons which led to them, must feel that, as it now stands composed, in the hostile division of its sects, in the animosities existing between ancient settlers and original inhabitants, in the ignorance and want of civilization, which marks that country more than almost any other country in Europe, in the unfortunate prevalence of jacobin principles, arising from these causes, and augmenting their malignity, and which have produced that distressed state which we now deplore;—every one, I say, who reflects upon all these circumstances, must agree with me in thinking, that there is no cure but in the formation of a general imperial legislature, free alike from terror and from resentment, removed from the danger and agitation, uninfluenced by the prejudices, and uninflamed by the passions of that distracted country.

I know that it is impossible, if we wish to consider this subject properly, to consider it in any other point of view than as it affects the empire in general. I know that the interests of the two countries must be taken together, and that a man cannot speak as a true Englishman, unless he speaks as a true Irishman, nor as a true Irishman, unless he speaks as a true Englishman; but if it were possible to separate them, and I could consider myself as addressing you, not as interested for the empire at large, but for Ireland alone, I should say, that it would be indispensably

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necessary, for the sake of that country, to compose its present distractions by the adoption of another system—I should say, that the establishment of an imperial legislature was the only means of healing its wounds, and of restoring it to tranquillity. I must here take the liberty of alluding to some topics which were touched upon during the discussion of the former night.

Among the great and known defects of Ireland, one of the most prominent features is, its want of industry and a capital; how are those wants to be supplied, but by blending more closely with Ireland the industry and the capital of this country? But, above all, in the great leading distinction between the people of Ireland, (I mean their religious distinctions,) what is their situation?—The protestant feels that the claims of the catholics threaten the existence of the protestant ascendancy; while, on the other hand, the great body of catholics feel the establishment of the national church, and their exclusion from the exercise of certain rights and privileges, a grievance. Between the two, it becomes a matter of difficulty in the minds of many persons, whether it would be better to listen only to the fears of the former, or to grant the claims of the latter.

I am well aware that the subject of religious distinction is a dangerous and delicate topic, especially when applied to a country such as Ireland, the situation of which is different in this respect from that of every other. Where the established religion of the state is the same as the general religion of the empire, and where the property of the country is in the hands of a comparatively small number of persons professing that established religion, while the religion of a great majority of the people is different, it is not easy to say, on general principles, what system of church establishment in such a country would be free from difficulty and inconvenience. By many I know it will be contended, that the religion professed by the majority of the people would, at least, be entitled to an equality of privileges. I have heard such an argument used in this house; but those who apply it without qualification to the case of Ireland, forget surely the principles on which English interest and English connexion has

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been established in that country, and on which its present legislature is formed. No man can say, that, in the present state of things, and while Ireland remains a separate kingdom, full concessions could be made to the catholics, without endangering the state, and shaking the constitution of Ireland to its centre.

On the other hand, without anticipating the discussion, or the propriety of agitating the question, or saying how soon or how late it may be fit to discuss it, two propositions are indisputable: first, when the conduct of the catholics shall be such as to make it safe for the government to admit them to the participation of the privileges granted to those of the established religion, and when the temper of the times shall be favourable to such a measure—when these events take place, it is obvious that such a question may be agitated in an united, imperial parliament, with much greater safety, than it could be in a separate legislature. In the second place, I think it certain that, even for whatever period it may be thought necessary, after the union, to withhold from the catholics the enjoyment of those advantages, many of the objections which at present arise out of their situation would be removed, if the protestant legislature were no longer separate and local, but general and imperial; and the catholics themselves would at once feel a mitigation of the most goading and irritating of their present causes of complaint.

How far, in addition to this great and leading consideration, it may also be wise and practicable to accompany the measure by some mode of relieving the lower orders from the pressure of tithes, which, in many instances, operate at present as a great practical evil, or to make, under proper regulations, and without breaking in on the security of the present protestant establishment, an effectual and adequate provision for the catholic clergy, it is not now necessary to discuss. It is sufficient to say, that these and all other subordinate points connected with the same subject, are more likely to be permanently and satisfactorily settled by an united legislature, than by any local arrangements. On these grounds I contend, that with a view to providing an effectual remedy for the distractions which have unhappily

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prevailed in Ireland, with a view of removing those causes which have endangered, and still endanger its security, the measure which I am now proposing promises to be more effectual than any other which can be devised; and on these grounds alone, if there existed no other, I should feel it my duty to submit it to the house.

But, Sir, though what I have thus stated, relates most immediately to the great object of healing the dissensions, and providing for the internal tranquillity of Ireland, there are also other objects which, though comparatively with this of inferior importance, are yet in themselves highly material, and in a secondary view well worthy of attention.

I have heard it asked, when I pressed the measure, What are the positive advantages that Ireland is to derive from it? To this very question I presume the considerations, which I have already urged, afford a sufficient answer. But, in fact, the question itself is to be considered in another view; and it will be found to bear some resemblance to a question which has been repeatedly put, by some of the gentlemen opposite to me, during the last six years, What are the advantages which Great Britain has gained by the present war with France?

To this, the brilliant successes of the British arms by sea and land, our unexampled naval victories over all our enemies, the solid acquisition of valuable territory, the general increase of our power, the progressive extension of our commerce, and a series of events more glorious than any that ever adorned the page of our history, afford at once an ample and a satisfactory answer. But there is another general answer which we have uniformly given, and which would alone be sufficient; it is, that we did not enter into this war for any purpose of ambition; our object was not to acquire, but to preserve; and in this sense, what we have gained by the war is, in one word, ALL that we should have lost without it; it is the preservation of our constitution, our independence, our honour, our existence as a nation.

In the same manner I might answer the question with respect to Ireland. I might enumerate the general advantages which

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Ireland would derive from the effects of the arrangement to which I have already referred—the protection which she will secure to herself in the hour of danger; the most effectual means of increasing her commerce and improving her agriculture, the command of English capital, the infusion of English manners and English industry, necessarily tending to ameliorate her condition, to accelerate the progress of internal civilization, and to terminate those feuds and dissensions which now distract the country, and which she does not possess, within herself, the power either to controul or to extinguish. She would see the avenue to honours, to distinctions, and exalted situations in the general seat of empire, opened to all those whose abilities and talents enable them to indulge an honourable and laudable ambition.

But, independent of all these advantages, I might also answer, that the question is not what Ireland is to gain, but what she is to preserve; not merely how she may best improve her situation, but how she is to avert a pressing and immediate danger. In this view, what she gains is the preservation of all those blessings arising from the British constitution, and which are inseparable from her connexions with Great Britain;—those blessings, of which it has long been the aim of France, in conjunction with domestic traitors, to deprive her, and on their ruins to establish (with all its attendant miseries and horrors) a jacobin republic, founded on French influence, and existing only in subserviency to France.

Such, Sir, would be the answer, if we direct our attention only to the question of general advantage. And here I should be inclined to stop; but since it has also been more particularly asked, what are the advantages which she is to gain, in point of commerce and manufactures, I am desirous of applying my answer more immediately and distinctly to that part of the subject; and as I know that the statement will carry more conviction with it to those who make the inquiry, if given in the words of the right honourable gentleman, to whom, and to whose opinions, I have had more than one occasion to advert in the course of this night, I will read you an extract from his recorded sentiments on the subject, in the year 1785, on this same memorable occasion

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of the commercial propositions. Speaking of a solid and unalterable compact between the two countries, speaking expressly of the peculiar importance of insuring a continuance of those commercial benefits, which she at that time held only at the discretion of this country, he says, "The exportation of Irish products to England amounts to two millions and a half annually; and the exportation of British products to Ireland amounts to but one million."

He then proceeds to reason upon the advantage which Ireland would derive, under such circumstances, from guarding against mutual prohibitions; and he accompanies the statement, which I have just read, with this observation——

"If, indeed, the adjustment were to take away the benefit from Ireland, it would be a good cause for rejecting it; but, as it for ever confirms all the advantages we derived from our linen trade, and binds England from making any law that can be injurious to it, surely gentlemen who regard that trade, and *whose fortunes and rents depend on its prosperity, will not entertain a moment's doubt about embracing the offer.*"

Such was the reasoning of the Irish chancellor of the exchequer, which I consider to have been perfectly just. With reference to his late opinions, I do not think I can more forcibly reply to a person who signs his name to propositions which declare, that the ruin of the linen trade of Ireland is likely to be the consequence of an union, than by opposing to him his own opinion. I shall be able to strengthen the former opinion of that gentleman, by stating, that the progress that has been made in commercial advantages to Ireland since 1785, has been such as to render his argument still more applicable. What is the nature of that commerce, explained by the same person in so concise and forcible a manner, that I am happy to use his own statement? He does not confine himself to the gross amount, but gives the articles in detail——

"Britain," he says, "imports annually from us two million five hundred thousand pounds of our products, all, or very nearly all, duty-free, and covenants never to lay a duty on them. We

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import about a million of hers, and raise a revenue on almost every article of it, and reserve the power of continuing that revenue. She exports to us salt for our fisheries and provisions; hops, which we cannot grow; coals, which we cannot raise; tin, which we have not; and bark, which we cannot get elsewhere: and all these without reserving any duty."

I will not tire the patience of the house by reading farther extracts; but the right honourable gentleman's whole speech, in like manner, points out the advantages of the commercial propositions (at that time under consideration) as a ground-work of a compact between the two countries, in 1785, on commercial subjects. But how stands the case now? The trade is at this time infinitely more advantageous to Ireland. It will be proved, from the documents which I hold in my hand, as far as relates to the mere interchange of manufactures, that the manufactures exported to Ireland from Great Britain, in 1797, very little exceeded a million sterling, (the articles of produce amount to nearly the same sum,) while Great Britain, on the other hand, imported from Ireland to the amount of near three millions in the manufactured articles of linen and linen yarn, and between two and three millions in provisions and cattle, besides corn and other articles of produce.

In addition to these articles, there are other circumstances of advantage to Ireland. Articles which are essential to her trade and to her subsistence, or serve as raw materials for her manufactures, are sent from hence free of duty. It is expressly stated, on the same authority, that all that we take back from Ireland was liable to a duty in that country on their exports: the increasing produce of the chief article of their manufacture, and four-fifths of her whole export trade, are to be ascribed, not to that *Independent Legislature*, but to the liberality of the British parliament. It is by the free admission of linens for our market, and the bounties granted by the British parliament on its re-export, that the linen trade has been brought to the height at which we now see it. To the parliament of this country, then, it is now owing, that a market has been opened for her linen to the amount

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of three millions. By the bounty we give to Ireland, we afford her a double market for that article, and (what is still more striking and important) we have prevented a competition against her, arising from the superior cheapness of the linen manufactures of the continent, by subjecting their importation to a duty of thirty per cent. Nothing would more clearly shew what would be the danger to Ireland from the competition in all its principal branches of the linen trade, than the simple fact, that we even now import foreign linens, under this heavy duty, to an amount equal to a seventh part of all that Ireland is able to send us, with the preference that has been stated. By this arrangement alone, we must, therefore, be considered, either as foregoing between seven and eight hundred thousand pounds per annum in revenue, which we should collect if we chose to levy the same duty on all linens, Irish as well as foreign; or, on the other hand, as sacrificing, perhaps, at least a million sterling in the price paid for those articles, by the subjects of this country, which might be saved, if we allowed the importation of all linen, foreign as well as Irish, equally free from duty.

The present measure is, however, in its effects, calculated not merely for a confirmation of the advantages on which the person, to whom I have alluded, has insisted. It is obvious that a fuller and more perfect connexion of the two countries, from whatever cause it may arise, must produce a greater facility and freedom of commercial intercourse, and ultimately tend to the advantage of both. The benefits to be derived to either country, from such an arrangement, must indeed, in a great measure, be gradual; but they are not on that account the less certain, and they cannot be stated in more forcible language than in that used in the speech to which I have referred——

"Gentlemen undervalue the reduction of British duties on our manufactures. I agree with them it may not operate soon, but we are to look forward to a final settlement, and it is impossible but that in time, with as good climate, equal natural powers, cheaper food, and fewer taxes, we must be able to sell to them. When commercial jealousy shall be banished by final

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settlement, and trade take its natural and steady course, the kingdoms will cease to look to rivalship, each will make that fabrick which it can do cheapest, and buy from the other what it cannot make so advantageously. Labour will be then truly employed to profit, not diverted by bounties, jealousies, or legislative interference, from its natural and beneficial course. This system will attain its real object, consolidating the strength of the remaining parts of the empire, by encouraging the communications of their market among themselves, with preference to every part against all strangers!"

I am, at least, therefore, secure from the design of appearing to deliver any partial or commercial opinion of my own, when I thus state, on the authority of a person the best informed, and who then judged dispassionately, both the infinite importance to Ireland of securing permanently the great commercial advantages which she now holds at the discretion of Great Britain, and the additional benefit which she would derive from any settlement which opened to her gradually a still more free and complete commercial intercourse with this country. And while I state thus strongly the commercial advantages to the sister kingdom, I have no alarm lest I should excite any sentiment of jealousy here. I know that the inhabitants of Great Britain wish well to the prosperity of Ireland; that, if the kingdoms are really and solidly united, they feel that to increase the commercial wealth of one country is not to diminish that of the other, but to increase the strength and power of both. But to justify that sentiment, we must be satisfied that the wealth we are pouring into the lap of Ireland is not every day liable to be snatched from us, and thrown into the scale of the enemy. If, therefore, Ireland is to continue, as I trust it will for ever, an essential part of the integral strength of the British empire; if her strength is to be permanently ours, and our strength to be hers, neither I nor any English minister, can ever be deterred, by the fear of creating jealousy in the hearts of Englishmen, from stating the advantages of a closer connexion, or from giving any assistance to the commercial prosperity of that kingdom.

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If ever, indeed, I should have the misfortune to witness the melancholy moment when such principles must be abandoned, when all hope of seeing Ireland permanently and securely connected with this country shall be at an end, I shall, at least, have the consolation of knowing, that it will not be the want of temper or forbearance, of conciliation, of kindness, or of full explanation on our part, which will have produced an event so fatal to Ireland, and so dangerous to Great Britain. If ever the overbearing power of prejudice and passion shall produce that fatal consequence, it will too late be perceived and acknowledged, that all the great commercial advantages which Ireland at present enjoys, and which are continually increasing, are to be ascribed to the liberal conduct, the fostering care of the British empire, extended to the sister kingdom as to a part of ourselves, and not (as has been fallaciously and vainly pretended) to any thing which has been done, or can be done, by the independent power of her own separate legislature.

I have thus, Sir, endeavoured to state to you the reasons, why I think this measure advisable; why I wish it to be proposed to the parliament of Ireland, with temper and fairness; and why it appears to me entitled, at least, to a calm and dispassionate discussion in that kingdom. I am aware, however, that objections have been urged against the measure, some of which are undoubtedly plausible, and have been but too successful in their influence on the Irish parliament. Of these objections I shall now proceed, as concisely as possible, to take some notice.

The first is, what I heard alluded to by the honourable gentleman* opposite to me, when his Majesty's message was brought down; namely—That the parliament of Ireland is incompetent to entertain and discuss the question, or rather, to act upon the measure proposed, without having previously obtained the consent of the people of Ireland, their constituents. But, Sir, I am led to suppose, from what the honourable gentleman afterwards stated, that he made this objection, rather by way of de-

* Mr. Sheridan.

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precating the discussion of the question, than as entertaining the smallest doubt upon it himself. If, however, the honourable gentleman, or any other gentleman on the other side of the house, should seriously entertain a doubt on the subject, I shall be ready to discuss it with him distinctly, either this night or at any future opportunity. For the present, I will assume that no man can deny the competency of the parliament of Ireland (representing as it does, in the language of our constitution, "*lawfully, fully, and freely, all the estates of the people of the realm,*) to make laws to bind that people, unless he is disposed to distinguish that parliament from the parliament of Great Britain, and, while he maintains the independence of the Irish legislature, yet denies to it the lawful and essential powers of parliament. No man, who maintains the parliament of Ireland to be co-equal with our own, can deny its competency on this question, unless he means to go the length of denying, at the same moment, the whole of the authority of the parliament of Great Britain—to shake every principle of legislation—and to maintain, that all the acts passed, and every thing done by parliament, or sanctioned by its authority, however sacred, however beneficial, is neither more nor less than an act of usurpation. He must not only deny the validity of the union between Scotland and England, but he must deny the authority of every one of the proceedings of the united legislature since the union; nay, Sir, he must go still farther, and deny the authority under which we now sit and deliberate here as a house of parliament: of course, he must deny the validity of the adjustment of 1782, and call in question every measure which he has himself been the most forward to have enforced. This point, Sir, is of so much importance, that I think I ought not to suffer the opportunity to pass, without illustrating more fully what I mean. If this principle of the incompetency of parliament to the decision of the measure be admitted, or if it be contended, that parliament has no legitimate authority to discuss and decide upon it, you will be driven to the necessity of recognizing a principle, the most dangerous that ever was adopted in any civilized state,—I

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mean the principle, that parliament cannot adopt any measure new in its nature, and of great importance, without appealing to the constituent and delegating authority for directions. If that doctrine be true, look to what an extent it will carry you. If such an argument could be set up and maintained, you acted without any legitimate authority when you created the representation of the principality of Wales, or of either of the counties palatine of England. Every law that parliament ever made, without that appeal, either as to its own frame and constitution, as to the qualification of the electors or the elected, as to the great and fundamental point of the succession to the crown, was a breach of treaty and an act of usurpation.

If we turn to Ireland itself, what do gentlemen think of the power of that parliament, which, without any fresh delegation from its protestant constituents, associates to itself all the catholic electors, and thus destroys a fundamental distinction on which it was formed? God forbid that I should object to or blame any of these measures! I am only stating the extent to which the principle, that parliament has no authority to decide upon the present measure, will lead; and, if it be admitted in one case, it must be admitted in all. Will any man say, that (although a protestant parliament in Ireland, chosen exclusively by protestant constituents, has, by its own inherent power, and without consulting those constituents, admitted and comprehended the catholics who were till then, in fact, a separate community) that parliament cannot associate itself with another protestant community, represented by a protestant parliament, having one interest with itself, and similar in its laws, its constitution, and its established religion? What must be said by those who have at any time been friends to any plan of parliamentary reform, and particularly such as have been most recently brought forward, either in Great Britain or Ireland? Whatever may have been thought of the propriety of the measure, I never heard any doubt of the competency of parliament to consider and discuss it. Yet I defy any man to maintain the principle of those plans, without contending that, as a member

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of parliament, he possesses a right to concur in disfranchising those who sent him to parliament, and to select others, by whom he was not elected, in their stead. I am sure that no sufficient distinction, in point of principle, can be successfully maintained for a single moment; nor should I deem it necessary to dwell on this point, in the manner I do, were I not convinced that it is connected in part with all those false and dangerous notions on the subject of government which have lately become too prevalent in the world. It may, in fact, be traced to that gross perversion of the principles of all political society, which rests on the supposition that there exists continually in every government a sovereignty *in abeyance* (as it were) on the part of the people, ready to be called forth on every occasion, or rather, on every pretence, when it may suit the purposes of the party or faction who are the advocates of this doctrine to suppose an occasion for its exertion. It is in these false principles that are contained the seeds of all the misery, desolation, and ruin, which in the present day have spread themselves over so large a proportion of the habitable globe.

These principles, Sir, are, at length, so well known and understood in their practical effects, that they can no longer hope for one enlightened or intelligent advocate, when they appear in their true colours. Yet, with all the horror we all feel, in common with the rest of the world, at the effect of them, with all the confirmed and increasing love and veneration which we feel towards the constitution of our country, founded as it is, both in theory and experience, on principles directly the reverse, there are too many among us, who, while they abhor and reject such opinions, when presented to them in their naked deformity, suffer them in a more disguised shape to be gradually infused into their minds, and insensibly to influence and bias their sentiments and arguments on the greatest and most important discussions. This concealed poison is now more to be dreaded than any open attempt to support such principles by argument, or to enforce them by arms. No society, whatever be its particular form, can long subsist, if this principle is once admitted. In

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every government, there must reside somewhere a supreme, absolute, and unlimited authority. This is equally true of every lawful monarchy—of every aristocracy—of every pure democracy (if indeed such a form of government ever has existed, or ever can exist)—and of those mixed constitutions formed and compounded from the others, which we are justly inclined to prefer to any of them. In all these governments, indeed alike, that power may by possibility be abused; but whether the abuse is such as to justify and call for the interference of the people collectively, or more properly speaking, of any portion of it, must always be an extreme case, and a question of the greatest and most perilous responsibility, not in law only, but in conscience and in duty, to all those who either act upon it themselves, or persuade others to do so. But no provision for such a case ever has been or can be made beforehand; it forms no chapter in any known code of laws, it can find no place in any system of human jurisprudence. But, above all, if such a principle can make no part of any established constitution, not even of those where the government is so framed as to be most liable to the abuse of its powers, it will be preposterous indeed to suppose that it can be admitted in one where those powers are so distributed and balanced as to furnish the best security against the probability of such an abuse. Shall that principle be sanctioned as a necessary part of the best government, which cannot be admitted to exist as an established check even upon the worst! Pregnant as it is with danger and confusion, shall it be received and authorized in proportion as every reason, which can ever make it necessary to recur to it, is not likely to exist? Yet, Sir, I know not how it is, that, in proportion as we are less likely to have occasion for so desperate a remedy, in proportion as a government is so framed as to provide within itself the best guard and control on the exercise of every branch of authority, to furnish the means of preventing or correcting every abuse of power, and to secure, by its own natural operation, a due attention to the interest and feelings of every part of the community, in that very proportion persons have been found perverse enough to imagine, that such

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a constitution admits and recognises, as a part of it, that which is inconsistent with the nature of any government, and, above all, inapplicable to our own.

I have said more, Sir, upon this subject than I should have thought necessary, if I had not felt that this false and dangerous mockery of the *sovereignty of the people* is in truth one of the chief elements of jacobinism, one of the favourite impostures to mislead the understanding, and to flatter and inflame the passions of the mass of mankind, who have not the opportunity of examining and exposing it, and that, as such, on every occasion, and in every shape in which it appears, it ought to be combated and resisted by every friend to civil order, and to the peace and happiness of mankind.

Sir, the next and not the least prevalent, objection, is one which is contained in words which are an appeal to a natural and laudable, but what I must call an erroneous and mistaken, sense of national pride. It is an appeal to the generous and noble passions of a nation easily inflamed under any supposed attack upon its honour, I mean the attempt to represent the question of an union by compact between the parliaments of the two kingdoms as a question involving the independence of Ireland.—It has been said, that no compensation could be made to any country for the surrender of its national independence. Sir, on this, as well as on every part of the question, I am desirous gentlemen should come closely to the point, that they should sift it to the bottom, and ascertain upon what grounds and principles their opinion really rests. Do they mean to maintain that in any humiliating, in any degrading sense of the word which can be acted upon practically as a rule, and which can lead to any useful conclusion, that at any time when the government of any two separate countries unite in forming one more extensive empire, the individuals who composed either of the former narrow societies are afterwards less members of an independent country, or to any valuable and useful purpose less possessed of political freedom or civil happiness, than they were before? It must be obvious to every gentleman who will look at the subject, in

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tracing the histories of all the countries, the most proud of their present existing independence, of all the nations in Europe, there is not one that could exist in the state in which it now stands, if that principle had been acted upon by our forefathers; and Europe must have remained to this hour in a state of ignorance and barbarism, from the perpetual warfare of independent and petty states. In the instance of our own country, it would be a superfluous waste of time to enumerate the steps by which all its parts were formed into one kingdom; but will any man in general assert, that in all the different unions which have formed the principal states of Europe, their inhabitants have become less free, that they have had less of which to be proud, less scope for their own exertions, than they had in their former situation? If this doctrine is to be generally maintained, what becomes of the situation at this hour of any one county of England, or of any one county of Ireland, now united under the independent parliament of that kingdom? If it be pushed to its full extent, it is obviously incompatible with all civil society. As the former principle of the sovereignty of the people strikes at the foundation of all governments, so this is equally hostile to all political confederacy, and mankind must be driven back to what is called the state of nature.

But while I combat this general and abstract principle, which would operate as an objection to every union between separate states, on the ground of the sacrifice of independence, do I mean to contend that there is in no case just ground for such a sentiment? Far from it: it may become, on many occasions, the first duty of a free and generous people. If there exists a country which contains within itself the means of military protection, the naval force necessary for its defence, which furnishes objects of industry sufficient for the subsistence of its inhabitants, and pecuniary resources adequate to maintaining, with dignity, the rank which it has attained among the nations of the world; if, above all, it enjoys the blessings of internal content and tranquillity, and possesses a distinct constitution of its own, the defects of which, if any, it is within itself capable of correcting; and if that

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constitution be equal, if not superior, to that of any other in the world, or (which is nearly the same thing) if those who live under it believe it to be so, and fondly cherish that opinion, I can indeed well understand that such a country must be jealous of any measure, which, even by its own consent, under the authority of its own lawful government, is to associate it as a part of a larger and more extensive empire.

But, Sir, if, on the other hand, it should happen that there be a country which, against the greatest of all dangers that threaten its peace and security, has not adequate means of protecting itself without the aid of another nation; if that other be a neighbouring and kindred nation, speaking the same language, whose laws, whose customs and habits are the same in principle, but carried to a greater degree of perfection, with a more extensive commerce, and more abundant means of acquiring and diffusing national wealth; the stability of whose government—the excellence of whose constitution, is more than ever the admiration and envy of Europe, and of which the very country of which we are speaking, can only boast an inadequate and imperfect resemblance;—under such circumstances, I would ask, what conduct would be prescribed by every rational principle of dignity, of honour, or of interest? I would ask, whether this is not a faithful description of the circumstances which ought to dispose Ireland to an union?—Whether Great Britain is not precisely the nation with which, on these principles, a country, situated as Ireland is, would desire to unite?. Does an union, under such circumstances, by free consent, and on just and equal terms, deserve to be branded as a proposal for subjecting Ireland to a foreign yoke? Is it not rather the free and voluntary association of two great countries, which join, for their common benefit, in one empire, where each will retain its proportional weight and importance, under the security of equal laws, reciprocal affection, and inseparable interests, and which want nothing but that indissoluble connexion to render both invincible?

Non ego nec Teucris Italos parere jubebo,
Nec nova regna peto; paribus se legibus ambæ
Invictæ gentes æterna in fœdera mittant.

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Sir, I have nearly stated all that is necessary for me to trouble the house with; there are, however, one or two other objections which I wish not entirely to pass over: one of them is, a general notion that an union with Great Britain must necessarily increase one of the great evils of Ireland, by prodpeing depopulation in many parts of the country, and by increasing greatly the number of absentees. I do not mean to deny that this effect would, to a limited extent, take place during a part of the year; but I think it will not be difficult for me to prove, that this circumstance will be more than counterbalanced by the operation of the system in other respects.

If it be true that this measure has an inevitable tendency to admit the introduction of that British capital which is most likely to give life to all the operations of commerce, and to all the improvements of agriculture; if it be that, which above all other considerations is most likely to give security, quiet, and internal repose to Ireland; if it is likely to remove the chief bar to the internal advancement of wealth and of civilization, by a more intimate intercourse with England; if it is more likely to communicate from hence those habits which distinguish this country; and which, by a continued gradation, unite the highest and the lowest orders of the community without a chasm in any part of the system; if it is not only likely to invite (as I have already said) English capital to set commerce in motion, but to offer it the use of new markets, to open fresh resources of wealth and industry, can wealth, can industry, can civilization increase among the whole bulk of the people without much more than counterbalancing the partial effect of the removal of the few individuals who, for a small part of the year, would follow the seat of legislation? If, notwithstanding the absence of parliament from Dublin, it would still remain the centre of education and of the internal commerce of a country increasing in improvement; if it would still remain the seat of legal discussion, which must always increase with an increase of property and occupation, will it be supposed, with a view even to the interests of those whose partial interests have been most successfully ap-

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pealed to; with a view either to the respectable body of the bar, to the merchant, or shopkeeper of Dublin, (if it were possible to suppose that a transaction of this sort ought to be referred to that single criterion,) that they would not find their proportionate share of advantage in the general advantage of the state? Let it be remembered also, that if the transfer of the seat of legislature may call from Ireland to England the members of the united parliament, yet, after the union, property, influence and consideration in Ireland will lead, as much as in Great Britain, to all the objects of imperial ambition; and there must, consequently, exist a new incitement to persons to acquire property in that country, and to those who possess it, to reside there, and to cultivate the good opinion of those with whom they live, and to extend and improve their influence and connexions.

But, Sir, I need not dwell longer on argument, however it may satisfy my own mind, because we can on this question refer to experience. I see every gentleman anticipates that I allude to Scotland. What has been the result of the union there? An union, give me leave to say, as much opposed, and by much the same arguments, prejudices, and misconceptions, as are urged at this moment; creating too the same alarms, and provoking the same outrages, as have lately taken place in Dublin. Look at the metropolis of Scotland: the population of Edinburgh has been more than doubled since the union, and a new city added to the old. But we may be told, that Edinburgh has engrossed all the commerce of that country, and has those advantages which Dublin cannot expect. Yet while Edinburgh, deprived of its parliament, but retaining, as Dublin would retain, its courts of justice; continuing, as Dublin would continue, the resort of those whose circumstances would not permit them to visit a distant metropolis; continuing, as Dublin would continue, the seat of national education, while Edinburgh has baffled all the predictions of that period, what has been the situation of Glasgow? The population of Glasgow, since the union, has increased in the proportion of between five and six to one: look at its progress in manufactures; look at its general advantages, and tell me what

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ground there is, judging by experience in aid of theory, for those gloomy apprehensions which have been so industriously excited.

There remains, Sir, another general line of argument, which I have already anticipated, and I hope answered, that the commercial privileges now enjoyed by Ireland, and to which it owes so much of its prosperity, would be less secure than at present. I have given an answer to that already, by stating, that they are falsely imputed to the independence of the Irish parliament, for that they are, in fact, owing to the exercise of the voluntary discretion of the British parliament, unbound by compact, prompted only by its natural disposition to consider the interests of Ireland the same as its own; and if that has been done while Ireland is only united to us in the imperfect and precarious manner in which it is, while it has a separate parliament, notwithstanding the commercial jealousies of our own manufacturers; if under these circumstances we have done so, if we have done so with no other connexion than that which now subsists, and while Ireland has no share in our representation, what fresh ground can there be for apprehension, when she will have her proportionate weight in the legislature, and will be united with us as closely as Lancashire or Yorkshire, or any other county in Great Britain?

Sir, I have seen it under the same authority to which I am sorry so often to advert, that the linen trade would be injured, and that there will be no security for its retaining its present advantages. I have already stated to you (and with that very authority in my favour) that those advantages are at present precarious, and that their security can only arise from compact with Great Britain. Such a compact this measure would establish in the most solemn manner; but besides this, Sir, the natural policy of this country, not merely its experienced liberality, but the identity of interests after an union, would offer a security worth a thousand compacts.

Sir, the only other general topic of objection is that, upon which great pains have been taken to raise an alarm in Ireland—the idea that the main principle of the measure was to subject

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Ireland to a load of debt and an increase of taxes, and to expose her to the consequences of all our alleged difficulties and supposed necessities.

Sir, I hope the zeal, the spirit, and the liberal and enlarged policy of this country, has given ample proof that it is not from a pecuniary motive that we seek an union. If it is not desirable on the grounds I have stated, it cannot be recommended for the mere purpose of taxation; but to quiet any jealousy on this subject, here again let us look to Scotland: Is there any instance where, with 45 members on her part and 513 on ours, that part of the united kingdom has paid more than its proportion to the general burdens? Is it then, Sir, any ground of apprehension that we are likely to tax Ireland more heavily when she becomes associated with ourselves? To tax in its due proportion the whole of the empire, to the utter exclusion of the idea of the predominance of one part of society over another, is the great characteristic of British finance, as equality of laws is of the British constitution.

But, Sir, in addition to this, if we come to the details of this proposition, it is in our power to fix, for any number of years which shall be thought fit, the proportion by which the contribution of Ireland to the expenses of the state, shall be regulated; that these proportions shall not be such as would make a contribution greater than the necessary amount of its own present necessary expenses as a separate kingdom; and even after that limited period, the proportion of the whole contribution from time to time might be made to depend on the comparative produce, in each kingdom, of such general taxes as might be thought to afford the best criterion of their respective wealth. Or, what I should hope would be found practicable, the system of internal taxation in each country might gradually be so equalized and assimilated, on the leading articles, as to make all rules of specific proportion unnecessary, and to secure, that Ireland shall never be taxed out in proportion as we tax ourselves.

The application of these principles, however, will form matter of future discussion—I mention them only as strongly shewing, from

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the misrepresentation which has taken place on this part of the subject, how incumbent it is upon the house to receive these propositions, and to adopt, after due deliberation, such resolutions as may record to Ireland the terms upon which we are ready to meet her: and, in the mean time, let us wait, not without impatience, but without dissatisfaction, for that moment, when the effect of reason and discussion may reconcile the minds of men in that kingdom to a measure which I am sure will be found as necessary for their peace and happiness, as it will be conducive to the general security and advantage of the British empire.

Sir, it remains for me only to lay these resolutions before the house, wishing that the more detailed discussion of them may be reserved to a future day.

Resolved, "First, That in order to promote and secure the essential interests of Great Britain and Ireland, and to consolidate the strength, power, and resources of the British empire, it will be advisable to concur in such measures as may best tend to unite the two kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland into one kingdom, in such manner, and on such terms and conditions, as may be established by acts of the respective parliaments of his Majesty's said kingdoms.

"Second, That it appears to this committee that it would be fit to propose as the first article to serve as a basis of the said union, that the said kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland shall, upon a day to be agreed upon, be united into one kingdom, by the name of the *United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.*

"Third, That for the same purpose it appears also to this committee, that it would be fit to propose that the succession to the monarchy and the imperial crown of the said united kingdoms shall continue limited and settled, in the same manner as the imperial crown of the said kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland now stands limited and settled, according to the existing laws, and to the terms of the union between England and Scotland.

"Fourth, That for the same purpose it appears also to this committee, that it would be fit to propose that the said united kingdom

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be represented in one and the same parliament, to be styled the Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and that such a number of lords spiritual and temporal, and such a number of members of the house of commons as shall be hereafter agreed upon by acts of the respective parliaments as aforesaid, shall sit and vote in the said parliament on the part of Ireland, and shall be summoned, chosen, and returned, in such manner as shall be fixed by an act of the parliament of Ireland previous to the said union; and that every member hereafter to sit and vote in the said parliament of the united kingdom shall, until the said parliament shall otherwise provide, take and subscribe the same oaths, and make the same declaration, as are by law required to be taken, subscribed, and made, by the members of the parliaments of Great Britain and Ireland.

"Fifth, That for the same purpose it appears also to this committee, that it would be fit to propose that the churches of England and Ireland, and the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government thereof, shall be preserved as now by law established.

"Sixth, That for the same purpose it appears also to this committtee, that it would be fit to propose that his Majesty's subjects in Ireland shall at all times hereafter be entitled to the same privileges, and be on the same footing in respect of trade and navigation, in all ports and places belonging to Great Britain, and in all cases with respect to which treaties shall be made by his Majesty, his heirs, or successors, with any foreign power, as his Majesty's subjects in Great Britain; that no duty shall be imposed on the import or export between Great Britain and Ireland of any articles now duty-free; and that on other articles there shall be established, for a time to be limited, such a moderate rate of equal duties as shall, previous to the union, be agreed upon and approved by the respective parliaments, subject, after the expiration of such limited time, to be diminished equally with respect to both kingdoms, but in no case to be increased; that all articles which may at any time hereafter be imported into Great Britain from foreign parts, shall be importable through either kingdom into the other, subject to the like duties and regulations as if the same were imported directly from foreign parts;

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that where any articles, the growth, produce, or manufacture of either kingdom, are subject to any internal duty in one kingdom, such countervailing duties (over and above any duties on import to be fixed as aforesaid) shall be imposed, as shall be necessary to prevent any inequality in that respect; and that all other matters of trade and commerce other than the foregoing, and than such others as may before the union be specially agreed upon for the due encouragement of the agriculture and manufactures of the respective kingdoms, shall remain to be regulated from time to time by the united parliament.

"Seventh, That for the like purpose it would be fit to propose that the charge arising from the payment of the interest or sinking fund for the reduction of the principle of the debt incurred in either kingdom before the union, shall continue to be separately defrayed by Great Britain and Ireland respectively. That for a number of years to be limited, the future ordinary expenses of the united kingdom, in peace or war, shall be defrayed by Great Britain and Ireland jointly, according to such proportions as shall be established by the respective parliaments previous to the union; and that after the expiration of the time to be so limited, the proportions shall not be liable to be varied, except according to such rates and principles as shall be in like manner agreed upon previous to the union.

"Eighth, That for the like purpose it would be fit to propose that all laws in force at the time of the union, and that all the courts of civil or ecclesiastical jurisdiction within the respective kindoms shall remain as now by law established within the same, subject only to such alterations or regulations from time to time as circumstances may appear to the parliament of the united kingdom to require.

"That the foregoing resolutions be laid before his Majesty, with an humble address, assuring his Majesty that we have proceeded with the utmost attention to the consideration of the important objects recommended to us in his Majesty's gracious message:

"That we entertain a firm persuasion that a complete and entire

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union between Great Britain and Ireland, founded on equal and liberal principles, on the similarity of laws, constitution, and government, and on a sense of mutual interests and affections, by promoting the security, wealth, and commerce, of the respective kingdoms, and by allaying the distractions which have unhappily prevailed in Ireland, must afford fresh means of opposing at all times an effectual resistance to the destructive projects of our foreign and domestic enemies, and must tend to confirm and augment the stability, power, and resources of the empire.

"Impressed with these considerations, we feel it our duty humbly to lay before his Majesty such propositions as appear to us best calculated to form the basis of such a settlement, leaving it to his Majesty's wisdom, at such time and in such manner as his Majesty, in his parental solicitude for the happiness of his people, shall judge fit, to communicate these propositions to his parliament of Ireland, with whom we shall be at all times ready to concur in all such measures as may be found most conducive to the accomplishment of this great and salutary work. And we trust that, after full and mature consideration, such a settlement may be framed and established, by the deliberate consent of the parliaments of both kingdoms, as may be conformable to the sentiments, wishes, and real interests of his Majesty's faithful subjects of Great Britain and Ireland, and may unite them inseparably in the full enjoyment of the blessings of our free and invaluable constitution, in the support of the honour and dignity of his Majesty's crown, and in the preservation and advancement of the welfare and prosperity of the whole British empire."

The question was carried for the Speaker's leaving the chair,

Ayes ------- 140
Noes ------- 15

and the House then went into a committee upon the resolutions.

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April 19, 1799.

THE House having resolved itself into a Committee of the whole House, to take into consideration the report of the secret committee relative to seditious societies,

Mr. PITT rose, and spoke in substance as follows:

It is not my intention, Sir, on the present occasion, to detain the committee by enlarging upon the circumstances stated in the report, which is now the subject of consideration. Those circumstances detailed in the report itself are so important in their nature, and so plainly and forcibly stated, that to dwell upon them would be to weaken rather than to add to the impression they are calculated to make. I shall content myself, therefore, with laying before you the outline of the measure, which it is my intention to propose as the ground of the resolutions of the committee, on which, if they should meet its concurrence, will follow a motion, that the chairman be instructed to move for leave to bring in bills to enact their provisions. Should these propositions be adopted, another opportunity will occur for the discussion of their details. This much, however, I think I may venture to say, that there cannot be two opinions as to the necessity of continuing and enforcing those wise and salutary measures of precaution to which we are indebted for our safety, and by which we have been enabled to repress the efforts of the most desperate, wicked, and cruel conspiracy against our liberties, our constitution, and our peace, that is to be found in the history of this country. From the report of the committee, we perceive that among other things the utmost advantage has resulted from that great measure of precaution, the act empowering his Majesty to secure and detain persons suspected of conspiring against his person and government—a measure which has been attended with the most beneficial effects at moments the most critical, in breaking up the designs of the conspirers, when they approached nearly to the period of their execution. Previous even to the report, in which its necessity is so satisfactorily developed, the facts notorious to the

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world would have been sufficient to justify an application to parliament for prolonging the duration of the act suspending the *habeas corpus*. Following up at the same time the suggestions in the report, the first motion I shall have the honour to propose will be to continue that measure, at the same time, adding to it a provision to render it more effectual, a provision founded as well upon its general propriety, as upon the particular circumstances which the report has explained. What I allude to is, to adopt a regulation empowering his Majesty to transfer persons arrested under this act to any place within the kingdom which may be deemed most eligible. I do not mean to enlarge upon the policy of such a provision. I shall only observe, that it will be notorious to the committee, from the report under consideration, and from another report lately presented to the house, that one of the principal features of that conspiracy which has been prosecuted in this country, but more particularly in the sister kingdom, where it actually led to so much calamity and bloodshed, has been that the designs of the conspirators have continued to be conducted under the direction of persons in custody on charges of being its authors, or guilty upon their own confession. How far the case here has been similar to that I have stated, it is needless at present to enquire. It will hardly be denied, that circumstances are such as to require that all doubts should be removed respecting the power of his Majesty to transfer persons in this situation to the most safe and proper place of confinement, and likewise to enable government to detain in custody here persons arrested in Ireland in the circumstances I have described. This provision arises out of the message received from his Majesty, respecting the persons brought from the sister kingdom, to be detained in confinement in Great Britain.

I feel likewise that it will not be sufficient to continue and enforce the laws already adopted for our security, if we did not adopt some precaution against the particular character of the mischief against which we are called upon to guard. I allude to that point so clearly established by the most powerful body of evidence before us, the existence of secret societies totally un

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known in the history of this or any other country. Impressed with the observation in the report of the committee, that in the great struggle we maintain against jacobinism it is necessary to watch the symptoms of the malady, and to adapt the remedy to the appearance it assumes, we must feel ourselves bound to accommodate our precautions to the evil which we have discovered. It will at the same time be recorded to the honour of the British parliament, that while it did not neglect the salutary precautions which circumstances imperiously dictated, it did not pass beyond the bounds of that necessity; that, equally firm and temperate, it has recollected what was to be yielded to safety, and what was due to the constitution, that it might with just discernment and moderation accommodate the precaution to the danger.

Considering the inveterate spirit and the invincible perseverance of the enemy, with whom we have to contend, I do not think that any one measure could be warranted as sufficient to carry the constitution safe through that mighty struggle we have to maintain; to that haven of security and peace, which, after a period of exertion and of perseverance, more or less protracted, we have a confident hope of attaining. For this arduous contest, however, be it shorter or be it longer, we must be prepared; we must be determined firmly to abide by the cause we have embraced, vigorously to continue the efforts we have exerted, to follow up wisely and vigilantly the provisions which we have hitherto employed, unless we are contented to yield to the superior vigilance, energy and perseverance of an implacable enemy, the pre-eminent blessings which we enjoy.

It is the duty of parliament, then, carefully to watch the symptoms of the malady by which we are assailed. The point which to-day seems most urgently to challenge our attention, is that of the secret societies I have mentioned, all of which possess a common distinguishing character. Wherever they have existed, they have been animated by the same spirit, dedicated to the same objects, and known by the same effects. They have spread themselves in Great Britain, in Ireland, throughout Europe. In the sister kingdom, we have seen them not merely threatening the

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mischiefs with which they are fraught, but at one moment scattering their baleful consequences, and openly attempting the overthrow of all established government. Even here, notwithstanding the prevalent loyalty of the great mass of the people, and the powerful obstacles with which they have had to contend, we have seen that invincible perseverance in a bad cause by which the spirit of jacobinism is peculiarly characterized, while in other parts of Europe, the existence of these secret societies has uniformly been the forerunner, or the attendant of the progress of French principles and the ravage of French arms.

These societies, too, are in their nature totally repugnant to the genius of this constitution, and strange to the habits of this nation. They are clearly of foreign growth; and, while we are bound to discourage them, we can employ with the more satisfaction the strong measures which are necessary to their suppression, because we must be sensible that we do not trench upon the principles or the spirit of that liberty we inherit from our ancestors;—that we do not impair those privileges which give sanction to the great right of petition to all recognised classes of men, and with none of which those new descriptions of persons can at all be confounded. Among the societies of this nature are *The Corresponding Society*, *The United English*, *The United Scots*, *The United Britons*, and *The United Irish*. These societies are now so clearly proved to be such an abuse of the privileges of this constitution—so entirely inconsistent with all government, that all must agree that they ought to be suppressed. In doing this, there is one consideration which we ought to keep in view: we must be aware that, from the very outset, the leaders of these baneful societies distinctly anticipated in their designs all those horrors and calamities which have since been developed in their progress. Many individuals, however, there must have been who, not understanding the purposes for which they were to co-operate, or not foreseeing the evils to which they would lead, were lightly and inconsiderately drawn in to become members of such societies. Adopting this distinction, then, it is intended that the measures for suppressing these bodies shall only be prospective, that they

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shall not aim at punishment, but prevention. We shall do our duty in setting a mark on the house where the pestilential contagion prevails, and then let those who enter perish. In the first instance it shall be the mild and forgiving policy of the measures proposed, to separate the misguided from the criminal. At the same time I have no hesitation in saying, that after experiencing this signal exercise of mercy and forbearance, those who shall continue members of those societies, contract the guilt of adhering to designs of deliberate treason. As, however, the great object is to detect and to punish those who may be guilty of this offence, in its nature so deep and atrocious, I flatter myself that a summary conviction, followed by a summary punishment, would answer the desired effect. My intention, therefore, is to propose, that if any person after a day to be fixed shall continue a member of such societies, they shall, upon summary conviction before a magistrate, be liable to a certain fine, to be summarily inflicted. Looking at the description of persons who in general compose these associations, I hope that this regulation will be attended with the most salutary effect. Persuaded that even this simple mode of proceeding, and this very gentle punishment will be effectual, I am happy to propose, as a remedy for the evil, a measure which so little trenches upon those bulwarks of liberty which it must be our wish to preserve. At the same time, while in a political view it may attain the object desired, the punishment it provides in a moral view, is by no means commensurate to the guilt which it affects.

That there are degrees of guilt among the members of these societies is obvious; it is necessary to keep this distinction before us. To be merely one of the herd, may not be so criminal as to take an active part in promoting the illegal purposes for which the illegal association is formed. I should propose therefore to give an option, either to proceed by summary conviction and fine, or by way of indictment in any court of record, leaving it to the discretion of the court to punish the offenders by fine or imprisonment, or, in cases of greater aggravation, by transportation.

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It will be necessary likewise to provide, that the law shall not be confined in its operation to the societies already known by the names enumerated, but to societies of the same kind, and directed to the same objects, by whatever varying appellations they may be distinguished. Of this kind are those where there exists an unlawful and wicked engagement of mutual fidelity and secrecy, such as we have seen so much prevail. It shall apply to those where the same illegal bond prevails, which unhappily has been found to have so great an influence on the weak and ignorant minds of the deluded people; where is practised that mysterious secrecy in the appointment of the members and the committees, the president, secretaries, and the whole management of the affairs of the society. All those associations, where such practices exist, shall be declared unlawful. I need not hesitate to propose to accompany this provision with one which is necessary to its effect. This is to subject the masters of those houses where such meetings assemble, whether public or private, to a fine. Persons who have been members, and withdrawing themselves before a given day, to be exempted from the operation of the law. These regulations, in themselves so perfectly free from the imputation of severity, will, I hope, be sufficient to secure the objects we have in view. Such will be the first branch of the second measure which I feel it my duty to propose.

The next part of the bill would be intended to remedy an evil of inferior importance, one which in a certain degree must fall under the daily observation of every man who hears me, and which has formed a part of the plan so incessantly pursued, of perverting the understanding, depraving the minds, and corrupting the morals of the people of this country:—I allude to the Debating Societies, which, conducted as they have been, and directed to the questions they discuss, tend to undermine all the principles of morality in the minds of those by whom they are frequented. Some time ago it will be recollected that persons publicly delivered lectures of the most seditious tendency, and when these were prohibited by the laws so properly introduced for the remedy of such abuses, they assumed the title of historical

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lectures, and, with little variation, were directed to the same objects as before. Discussions of this nature in the hands by which they were taken up, and with the audience to whom they were addressed, were employed to attack all religion, government and society; and though in the outset they may not so directly lead to the consequences which it was the object of the conspirations of this country to attain, they ultimately tend to prepare the minds of men for those horrors and calamities, which are the infallible consequences of those principles against which it is our duty to provide. To prevent such dangerous abuses, it will be a part of the proposed measure to extend the provisions against seditious lectures and political discussions, to all places where money is taken at the door, making this the criterion, and putting them upon the footing of disorderly houses, unless where a licence has been previously taken out, and where they are subject to the inspection of the magistrate. By this regulation I conceive no innocent pursuit or amusement will be obstructed, and the public will be protected from an evil, of a danger far beyond the importance of those from whom it proceeds.

The provisions which I shall have the honour to propose, will likewise be directed against another part of that plan, pursued with no less industry to poison the minds of the ignorant and unwary. It has been the proud and distinguishing principle of the law of England, that the liberty of the press has been cherished as the most invaluable bulwark of liberty. It certainly is one from which, when not abused, the greatest advantages might be derived, but when abused and perverted, it has led to the greatest mischiefs. It has, therefore, been the object of the law of this country, without imposing any previous restraint to secure a subsequent responsibility in the author and publisher, if they should be guilty of private libels or public treason. Those publications of a higher order, under the laws of the country, and the prevalent spirit of loyalty in the people, are tolerably sure of being subjected to punishment for their libels, at least those of a more flagrant nature. Happily those libels, formerly so prevalent, are, owing to these causes, more restrained. Unfortunately, however, we have seen the liberty of the press abused in a way

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most calculated to pervert and mislead the lower orders. Instead of being employed to communicate knowledge and instruction, it has been perverted to give false and imperfect representations of facts, and inadequate or improper discussions of subjects in nowise adapted to those to whom they were addressed, and fitted to produce the greatest mischief to those who are the immediate objects, and ultimately to the public itself. Hence has been prosecuted to such an extent the plan of disseminating hand-bills, tending to poison the minds of the people, to deprave their morals, to pervert their loyalty, and to undermine their religion. Against this species of mischief some new provisions are necessary, the object of which will be always to have responsible the author or publisher. This regulation is strictly in the spirit of the constitution. If in its application it is new, it is because the evil is likewise new, while the remedy is so unexceptionable in its nature, that it must be approved by all who value public morals and public tranquillity.

A provision, the object of which is so legitimate, cannot be felt as a restraint by those who are engaged in the regular trade connected with the press. What is required, is to have the name of a publisher affixed to every hand-bill, as in every other species of publication. To prevent their being issued from private presses, it will be necessary to obtain some knowledge of those who may have such implements in their possession. To obtain this, it is proposed to have a register kept at those places where types are fabricated, (which are not very numerous,) to discover who acquire them, to make those who now have presses register them, and make it necessary for every publication circulated to bear the name of the publisher affixed to it. This regulation, I am sure, will not injure the cause of science, literature and improvement, or even interfere with any innocent amusement, while it will secure the public against the circulation of anonymous treason, sedition, or impiety, by which, in the quarters most exposed, the pillars of morality, religion, and government are attacked.

Such is the third object of the measure which I shall propose. The report of the committee will remain for further considera-

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tion, and it will be for the house to consider whether the nature of the dangers to which we are exposed, demands any fresh precautions. The circumstances of the times require a vigilance always ready to accommodate our measures of security to the degree of malignity which danger may assume, and to vary their remedies with the changing character of the evil by which we are threatened. Fortunate shall we be if the wise, moderate, and salutary provisions already adopted or proposed, shall prove adequate to the inveteracy of the disease, the virulence of which neither detection nor punishment, nor a sense of the blessings we enjoy, nor of the horrible calamities with which the principles of jacobinism have desolated Europe, has been able to abate. In spite of every discouragement and every obstacle, treason has pursued its purposes. Happily, this country has been shielded from the calamities of French principles and French treasons, by the well tempered vigour of its government, and the prevalent active loyalty of its people. Yet, against all this opposition conspiracy has struggled. Vigilance and energy are still requisite to secure the blessings so firmly maintained. Upon every occasion it has been the honourable character of parliament to have exerted a vigour limited to the necessity of the case. It has kept up to the urgency of the danger, and never overstepped the bounds of moderation. Preserving the liberties of the country sacred and unimpaired, it has displayed an energy proportioned to the magnitude of the crisis; and, guided by the same principles, I trust it will continue to pursue that course which has secured the constitution, the liberties, the prosperity, and the happiness of this country. I shall now move, Sir, "That it is the opinion of this committee, that a bill be brought in to renew and amend the bill passed in the thirty-eighth of his present Majesty, for securing and detaining persons accused of treason and sedition; and that a bill be brought in to suppress seditious societies and seditious practices."

The resolutions were passed without a division.

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June 7, 1799.

THE House having resolved itself into a Committee of Supply, his Majesty's message, which had been referred to the committee the preceding day, acquainting the House with the engagements entered into between his Majesty and the Emperor of Russia, was read.

Mr. PITT then rose, and in a short speech moved, "that the sum of 825,000*l.* be granted to his Majesty, to enable his Majesty to fulfil his engagements with Russia in such a manner as may be best adapted to the exigencies of the case."

Mr. Tierney opposed the motion on the ground of its object being undefined. He called upon ministers to declare what was the *common cause* they talked of, and what was meant by the *deliverance of Europe*; asserting, that he would not vote any sums for a purpose which he did not understand, and in aid of a power whose object he did not know, which might be appropriated to her own views exclusively, and to the injury instead of the welfare of England.

Mr. PITT.——I wish, Sir, to offer such an explanation on some of the topics dwelt upon by the honourable gentleman* who just sat down, as will, I think, satisfy the committee and the honourable gentleman. The nature of the engagement to which the message would pledge the house is simply, that, 1st, for the purpose of setting the Russian army in motion, we shall advance to that country 225,000*l.* part of which, by instalments, to accompany the subsidy to be paid when the army is in actual service. And I believe no one, who has been the least attentive to the progress of affairs in the world, who can appreciate worth, and admire superior zeal and activity, will doubt the sincerity of the sovereign of Russia, or make a question of his integrity in any compact. The 2d head of distribution is 75,000*l.* per month, to be paid at the expiration of every succeeding month of service; and, lastly, a subsidy of 37,500*l.* to be paid after the war, on the conclusion of a peace by common consent. Now, I think it strange that the honourable gentleman should charge us with want of prudence, while it cannot be unknown to him that the principal subsidies are not to be paid until the ser-

* Mr. Tierney.

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vice has been performed, and that in one remarkable instance the present subsidy differs from every other, in as much as a part of it is not to be paid until after the conclusion of a peace by common consent. I think gentlemen would act more consistently, if they would openly give their opposition on the principle that they cannot support the war under any circumstances of the country and of Europe, than in this equivocal and cold manner to embarrass our deliberations, and throw obstacles in the way of all vigorous co-operation. There is no reason, no ground to fear that that magnanimous prince will act with infidelity in a cause in which he is so sincerely engaged, and which he knows to be the cause of all good government, of religion and humanity, against a monstrous medley of tyranny, injustice, vanity, irreligion, ignorance, and folly. Of such an ally there can be no reason to be jealous; and least of all have the honourable gentlemen opposite me grounds of jealousy, considering the nature and circumstances of our engagements with that monarch. As to the sum itself, I think no man can find fault with it. In fact, it is comparatively small. We take into our pay 45,000 of the troops of Russia, and I believe, if any gentleman will look to all former subsidies, the result will be, that never was so large a body of men subsidized for so small a sum. This fact cannot be considered without feeling that this magnanimous and powerful prince has undertaken to supply at a very trifling expense a most essential force, and that for *the deliverance of Europe*. I still must use this phrase, notwithstanding the sneers of the honourable gentleman. Does it not promise the deliverance of Europe, when we find the armies of our allies rapidly advancing in a career of victory at once the most brilliant and auspicious that perhaps ever signalized the exertions of any combination? Will it be regarded with apathy, that that wise and vigorous and exalted prince has already, by his promptness and decision, given a turn to the affairs of the continent? Is the house to be called upon to refuse succours to our ally, who, by his prowess and the bravery of his arms, has attracted so much of the attention and admiration of Europe?

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The honourable gentleman says he wishes for peace, and that he approved more of what I said on this subject towards the close of my speech, than of the opening. Now what I said was, that if by powerfully seconding the efforts of our allies, we could only look for peace with any prospect of realizing our hopes, whatever would enable us to do so promptly and effectually would be true economy. I must, indeed, be much misunderstood, if generally it was not perceived that I meant, that whether the period which is to carry us to peace be shorter or longer, what we have to look to is not so much when we make peace, as whether we shall derive from it complete and solid security; and that whatever other nations may do, whether they shall persevere in the contest, or untimely abandon it, we have to look to ourselves for the means of defence, we are to look to the means to secure our constitution, preserve our character, and maintain our independence, in the virtue and perseverance of the people. There is a high-spirited pride, an elevated loyalty, a generous warmth of heart, a nobleness of spirit, a hearty, manly gaiety, which distinguish our nation, in which we are to look for the best pledges of general safety, and of that security against an aggressing usurpation, which other nations in their weakness or in their folly have yet no where found. With respect to that which appears so much to embarrass certain gentlemen—the deliverance of Europe—I will not say particularly what it is. Whether it is to be its deliverance from that under which it suffers, or that from which it is in danger; whether from the infection of false principles, the corroding cares of a period of distraction and dismay, or that dissolution of all governments, and that death of religion and social order which are to signalize the triumph of the French republic, if unfortunately for mankind she should, in spite of all opposition, prevail in the contest;—from whichsoever of these Europe is to be delivered, it will not be difficult to prove, that what she suffers, and what is her danger, are the power and existence of the French government. If any man says that the government is not a tyranny, he miserably mistakes the character of that body. It

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is an insupportable and odious tyranny, holding within its grasp the lives, the characters, and the fortunes of all who are forced to own its sway, and only holding these that it may at will measure out of each the portion, which from time to time it sacrifices to its avarice, its cruelty, and injustice. The French republic is dyked and fenced round with crime, and owes much of its present security to its being regarded with a horror which appals men in their approaches to its impious battlements.

The honourable gentleman says, that he does not know whether the Emperor of Russia understands what we mean by the deliverance of Europe. I do not think it proper here to dwell much at length on this curious doubt. But whatever may be the meaning which that august personage attaches to our phrase "the deliverance of Europe," at least he has shewn that he is no stranger to the condition of the world; that whatever be the specific object of the contest, he has learnt rightly to consider the character of the common enemy, and shews by his public proceedings that he is determined to take measures of more than ordinary precaution against the common disturbers of Europe, and the common enemy of man. Will the honourable gentleman continue in his state of doubt? Let him look to the conduct of that prince during what has passed of the present campaign. If in such conduct there be not unfolded some solicitude for the deliverance of Europe from the tyranny of France, I know not, Sir, in what we are to look for it.

But the honourable gentleman seems to think no alliance can long be preserved against France. I do not deny that unfortunately some of the nations of Europe have shamefully crouched to that power, and receded from the common cause, at a moment when it was due to their own dignity, to what they owed to that civilized community of which they are still a part, to persevere in the struggle, to reanimate their legions with that spirit of just detestation and vengeance which such inhumanity and cruelty might so well provoke. I do not say that the powers of Europe have not acted improperly in many other instances; and Russia in her turn: for,

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during a period of infinite peril to this country, she saw our danger advance upon us, and four different treaties entered into of offensive alliance against us, without comment, and without a single expression of its disapprobation. This was the conduct of that power in former times. The conduct of his present Majesty raises quite other emotions, and excites altogether a different interest. His Majesty, since his accession, has unequivocally declared his attachment to Great Britain, and abandoning those projects of ambition which formed the occupation of his predecessor, he chose rather to join in the cause of religion and order against France, than to pursue the plan marked out for him to humble and destroy a power, which he was taught to consider as his common enemy. He turned aside from all hostility against the Ottoman Porte, and united his force to the power of that prince, the more effectually to check the progress of the common enemy. Will, then, gentlemen continue to regard with suspicion the conduct of that prince? Has he not sufficiently shewn his devotion to the cause in which we are engaged, by the kind, and number, and value of his sacrifices, ultimately to prevail in the struggle against a tyranny which, in changing our point of vision, we every where find accompanied in its desolating progress by degradation, misery, and nakedness, to the unhappy victims of its power — a tyranny which has magnified and strengthened its powers to do mischief, in the proportion that the legitimate and venerable fabrics of civilized and polished society have declined from the meridian of their glory, and lost the power of doing good—a tyranny which strides across the ill-fated domain of France, its foot armed with the scythe of oppression and indiscriminate proscription, that touches only to blight, and rests only to destroy; the reproach and the curse of the infatuated people who still continue to acknowledge it. When we consider that it is against this monster the Emperor of Russia has sent down his legions, shall we say that he is not entitled to our confidence?

But what is the constitutional state of the question? It is competent, undoubtedly, to any gentleman to make the charac-

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ter of an ally the subject of consideration; but in this case it is not to the Emperor of Russia we vote a subsidy, but to his Majesty. The question, therefore, is, whether his Majesty's government affix any undue object to the message, whether they draw any undue inference from the deliverance of Europe. The honourable gentleman has told us, that his deliverance of Europe is the driving of France within her ancient limits—that he is not indifferent to the restoration of the other states of Europe to independence, as connected with the independence of this country; but it is assumed by the honourable gentleman, that we are not content with wishing to drive France within her ancient limits, that, on the contrary, we seek to overthrow the government of France; and he would make us say, that we never will treat with it as a republic. Now I neither meant any thing like this, nor expressed myself so as to lead to such inferences. Whatever I may in the abstract think of the kind of government called a republic, whatever may be its fitness to the nation where it prevails, there may be times when it would not be dangerous to exist in its vicinity. But while the spirit of France remains what at present it is, its government despotic, vindictive, unjust, with a temper untamed, a character unchanged, if its power to do wrong at all remains, there does not exist any security for this country or Europe. In my view of security, every object of ambition and aggrandizement is abandoned. Our simple object is security, just security, with a little mixture of indemnification. These are the legitimate objects of war at all times; and when we have attained that end, we are in a condition to derive from peace its beneficent advantages; but until then, our duty and our interest require that we should persevere unappalled in the struggle to which we were provoked. We shall not be satisfied with a false security. War, with all its evils, is better than a peace in which there is nothing to be seen but usurpation and injustice, dwelling with savage delight on the humble, prostrate condition of some timid suppliant people. It is not to be dissembled, that in the changes and chances to which the fortunes of individuals, as well as of states, are continually subject, we

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may have the misfortune, and great it would be, of seeing our allies decline the contest. I hope this will not happen. I hope it is not reserved for us to behold the mortifying spectacle of two mighty nations abandoning a contest, in which they have sacrificed so much, and made such brilliant progress.

In the application of this principle, I have no doubt but the honourable gentleman admits the security of the country to be the legitimate object of the contest; and I must think I am sufficiently intelligible on this topic. But wishing to be fully understood, I answer the honourable gentleman when he asks, "Does the right honourable gentleman mean to prosecute the war until the French republic is overthrown? Is it his determination not to treat with France while it continues a republic?"—I answer, I do not confine my views to the territorial limits of France; I contemplate the principles, character, and conduct of France; I consider what these are; I see in them the issues of distraction, of infamy and ruin, to every state in her alliance; and therefore I say, that until the aspect of that mighty mass of iniquity and folly is entirely changed;—until the character of the government is totally reversed;—until, by the common consent of the general voice of all men, I can with truth tell parliament, France is no longer terrible for her contempt of the rights of every other nation—she no longer avows schemes of universal empire—she has settled into a state whose government can maintain those relations in their integrity, in which alone civilized communities are to find their security, and from which they are to derive their distinction and their glory;—until in the situation of France we have exhibited to us those features of a wise, a just, and a liberal policy, I cannot treat with her. The time to come to the discussion of a peace can only be the time when you can look with confidence to an honourable issue; to such a peace as shall at once restore to Europe her settled and balanced constitution of general polity, and to every negotiating power in particular, that weight in the scale of general empire which has ever been found the best guarantee and pledge of local independence and general security. Such are my sentiments. I am not

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afraid to avow them. I commit them to the thinking part of mankind; and if they have not been poisoned by the stream of French sophistry, and prejudiced by her falsehood, I am sure they will approve of the determination I have avowed, for those grave and mature reasons on which I found it. I earnestly pray that all the powers engaged in the contest may think as I do, and particularly the Emperor of Russia, which, indeed, I do not doubt; and therefore I do contend, that with that power it is fit that the house should enter into the engagement recommended in his Majesty's message.

Mr. Tierney, in reply, commented on the last speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and contended that the explanation he had given made it clear, that it was not merely against the power of France we were struggling, but against her system;—not merely to repel her within her ancient limits, but to drive her back from her present to her ancient opinions;—in fact, to prosecute the war until the existing government of France should be overthrown. Upon which grounds he should refuse voting any subsidy for foreign service.

Mr. Pitt rose once more:

Sir, I cannot agree to the interpretation the honourable gentleman has thought proper to give to parts of my speech. He has supposed that I said, we persevere in the war, and increase our activity, and extend our alliances, to impose a government on another country, and to restore monarchy to France. I never once uttered any such intention. What I said was, and the house must be in the recollection of it, that the France which now exists, affords no promise of security against aggression and injustice in peace, and is destitute of all justice and integrity in war. I observed also, and I think the honourable gentleman must agree with me when I repeat it, that the character and conduct of that government must enter into the calculation of security to other governments against wrong, and for the due and liberal observance of political engagements. The honourable gentleman says, that he has too much good sense, and that every man must have too much good sense, to suppose that territorial limits can, of themselves, be made to constitute the se-

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curity of states. He does well to add his sanction to a doctrine that is as old as political society itself. In the civilized and regular community, states find their mutual security against wrong, not in territory only, they have the guarantee of fleets, of armies, of acknowledged integrity, and tried good faith; it is to be judged of by the character, the talents, and the virtues of the men who guide the councils of states, who are the advisers of princes: but what is it in the situation of the French republic, on which can be founded a confidence which is to be in itself some proof that she can afford security against wrong? She has territory, she has the remains of a navy, she has armies; but what is her character as a moral being? who is there to testify her integrity? The Swiss nation! — Who bears testimony to her good faith? The states she has plundered, under the delusive but captivating masks of deliverers from tyranny!—What is the character of her advisers? what the aspect of her councils? They are the authors of all that misery, the fountain-head of all those calamities, which, marching by the side of an unblushing tyranny, have saddened and obscured the fairest and the gayest portions of Europe, which have deformed the face of nature wherever their pestiferous genius has acquired an ascendancy. In fine, we are to look for security from a government which is constantly making professions of different kinds of sentiments, and is constantly receding from every thing it professes;—a government that has professed, and in its general conduct still manifests, enmity to every institution and state in Europe, and particularly to this country, the best regulated in its government, the happiest in itself, of all the empires that form that great community.

Having said thus much on those matters, I shall now shortly notice a continued confusion in the honourable gentleman's ideas. On another occasion he could not understand what I meant by the deliverance of Europe; and in this second effort of his inquisitive mind he is not more happy. He tells us, he cannot see any thing in the present principles of France but mere abstract metaphysical dogmas. What are those principles which

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guided the arms of France in their unprincipled attack on the independence of Switzerland, which the honourable gentleman has reprobated? Was the degradation, without trial, of the members of the assemblies of France—were, in short, those excesses, and that wickedness, in the contemplation of which the honourable gentleman says he first learnt to regard France as an odious tyranny—will he class the principles which could lead to all these things with the mere metaphysical obstructions of heated, over-zealous theorists? He will still persist, at least he has given the promise of considerable resistance to all arguments to the contrary, in saying that we have an intention to wage war against opinion. It is not so. We are not in arms against the opinions of the closet, nor the speculations of the school. We are at war with armed opinions; we are at war with those opinions which the sword of audacious, unprincipled, and impious innovation seeks to propagate amidst the ruin of empires, the demolition of the altars of all religion, the destruction of every venerable, and good, and liberal institution, under whatever form of polity they have been raised; and this, in spite of the dissenting reason of men, in contempt of that lawful authority which, in the settled order, superior talents and superior virtues attain, crying out to them not to enter on holy ground, nor to pollute the stream of eternal justice;—admonishing them of their danger, whilst, like the genius of evil, they mimic their voice, and, having succeeded in drawing upon them the ridicule of the vulgar, close their day of wickedness and savage triumph with the massacre and waste of whatever is amiable, learned, and pious, in the districts they have overrun. Whilst the principles avowed by France, and acted upon so wildly, held their legitimate place, confined to the circles of a few ingenious and learned men;—whilst these men continued to occupy those heights which vulgar minds could not mount;—whilst they contented themselves with abstract enquiries concerning the laws of matter or the progress of mind, it was pleasing to regard them with respect; for, while the simplicity of the man of genius is preserved untouched, if we will not pay homage to his eccen-

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tricity, there is, at least, much in it to be admired. Whilst these principles were confined in that way, and had not yet bounded over the common sense and reason of mankind, we saw nothing in them to alarm, nothing to terrify; but their appearance in arms changed their character. We will not leave the monster to prowl the world unopposed. He must cease to annoy the abode of peaceful men. If he retire into the cell, whether of solitude or repentance, thither we will not pursue him; but we cannot leave him on the throne of power.

I shall now give some farther instances of the confusion of the honourable gentleman's ideas. He says, that the French republic and liberty cannot exist together; therefore, as a friend to liberty, he cannot be a friend to France. Yet he tells us almost in the same breath, that he will not vote for any thing that does not tend to secure the liberties of that country, though, to give him the benefit of his own proposition, not to wish the overthrow of France is not to wish for the preservation of English liberty. Indeed, he says he will vote nothing for the purpose of overthrowing that tyranny, or, as he very strangely adds, the rights and liberties of others—the rights and liberties of France! But how will the gentleman maintain his character for consistency, while he will not vote for any measure that seeks to overthrow the power of a government, in the contemplation of which he has discovered a gulph in his mind between the ideas of its existence and the existence of liberty! It never, however, entered his mind to say that he made the overthrow of the French republic the *sine qua non*.

Here another example arises of that confusion of ideas into which, contrary to his usual custom, the honourable gentleman has fallen this evening: he says he is one of those who think, that a republic in France is not contrary to the safety of other countries, and not incongruous to the state of France itself. How strange is this! whilst we have it from the honourable gentleman, that liberty and the French republic cannot exist together. I am ready to say, that if the republican regimen was characterized by the sobriety of reason, affording nourishment,

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strength, and health to the members of the community; if the government was just and unambitious, as wisdom and sound policy dictate; if order reigned in her senates, morals in the private walk of life, and in their public places there were to be found the temples of their God, supported in dignity, and resorted to with pious awe, and strengthening veneration by the people, there would be in France the reality of a well-regulated state, under whatever denomination, but *obruit male partum, male retentum, male gestum imperium.* Whilst republican France continues what it is, then I make war against republican France; but if I should see any chance of the return of a government that did not threaten to endanger the existence of other governments, far be it from me to breathe hostility to it. I must first see this change of fortune to France and to Europe make its progress with rapid and certain steps, before I relax in the assertion of those rights, which, dearer to Britons than all the world, because by them better understood and more fully enjoyed, are the common property, the links of union of the regular governments of Europe. I must regard as an enemy, and treat as such, a government which is founded on those principles of universal anarchy, and frightful injustice, which, sometimes awkwardly dissembled, and sometimes insolently avowed, but always destructive, distinguish it from every other government of Europe.

The motion passed without a division.

February 3, 1800.

The order of the day being read for taking his Majesty's message into consideration, Mr. Dundas moved an address to the throne, approving of the answers that had been returned to the late communications from France, relative to a negociation for peace.

After Mr. Whitbread and Mr. Erskine had delivered their sentiments against the address, and Mr. Canning in support of it, Mr. Pitt rose, and spoke as follows:—

Sir, I am induced at this period of the debate, to offer my sentiments to the house, both from an apprehension that, at a

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later hour, the attention of the house must necessarily be exhausted, and because the sentiment with which the honourable and learned gentleman* began his speech, and with which he has thought proper to conclude it, places the question precisely on that ground on which I am most desirous of discussing it. The learned gentleman seems to assume, as the foundation of his reasoning, and as the great argument for immediate treaty, that every effort to overturn the system of the French revolution must be unavailing; and that it would be not only imprudent, but almost impious, to struggle longer against that order of things, which, on I know not what principle of predestination, he appears to consider as immortal. Little as I am inclined to accede to this opinion, I am not sorry that the honourable gentleman has contemplated the subject in this serious view. I do, indeed, consider the French revolution as the severest trial which the visitation of Providence has ever yet inflicted upon the nations of the earth; but I cannot help reflecting, with satisfaction, that this country, even under such a trial, has not only been exempted from those calamities which have covered almost every other part of Europe, but appears to have been reserved as a refuge and asylum to those who fled from its persecution, as a barrier to oppose its progress, and, perhaps, ultimately as an instrument to deliver the world from the crimes and miseries which have attended it.

Under this impression, I trust, the house will forgive me, if I endeavour, as far as I am able, to take a large and comprehensive view of this important question. In doing so, I agree with my honourable friend, that it would, in any case, be impossible to separate the present discussion from the former crimes and atrocities of the French revolution; because both the papers now on the table, and the whole of the learned gentleman's argument, force upon our consideration the origin of the war, and all the material facts which have occurred during its continuance. The learned gentleman has revived and retailed all those arguments from his own pamphlet, which had before passed through thirty-seven or thirty-eight editions in print; and now gives them to the house,

* Mr. Erskine.

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embellished by the graces of his personal delivery. The First Consul has also thought fit to revive and retail the chief arguments used by all the opposition speakers, and all the opposition publishers, in this country during the last seven years. And (what is still more material) the question itself, which is now immediately at issue—the question, whether, under the present circumstances, there is such a prospect of security from any treaty with France as ought to induce us to negociate, cannot be properly decided upon, without retracing, both from our own experience, and from that of other nations, the nature, the causes and the magnitude of the danger against which we have to guard, in order to judge of the security which we ought to accept.

I say, then, that before any man can concur in opinion with that learned gentleman; before any man can think that the substance of his Majesty's answer is any other than the safety of the country required; before any man can be of opinion, that to the overtures made by the enemy, at such a time, and under such circumstances, it would have been safe to have returned an answer concurring in the negociation—he must come within one of the three following descriptions: He must either believe, that the French revolution neither does now exhibit, nor has at any time exhibited, such circumstances of danger, arising out of the very nature of the system and the internal state and condition of France, as to leave to foreign powers no adequate ground of security in negociation; or, secondly, he must be of opinion, that the change which has recently taken place, has given that security, which, in the former stages of the revolution, was wanting; or thirdly, he must be one who, believing that the danger existed, not undervaluing its extent, nor mistaking its nature, nevertheless thinks, from his view of the present pressure on the country, from his view of its situation and its prospects, compared with the situation and prospects of its enemies, that we are, with our eyes open, bound to accept of inadequate security for every thing that is valuable and sacred, rather than endure the pressure, or incur the risk, which would result from a farther prolongation of the contest.

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In discussing the last of these questions, we shall be led to consider, what inference is to be drawn from the circumstances and the result of our own negociations in former periods of the war;—whether, in the comparative state of this country and France, we now see the same reason for repeating our then unsuccessful experiments;—or whether we have not thence derived the lessons of experience, added to the deductions of reason, marking the inefficacy and danger of the very measures which are quoted to us as precedents for our adoption.

Unwilling, Sir, as I am, to go into much detail on ground which has been so often trodden before; yet, when I find the learned gentleman, after all the information which he must have received, if he has read any of the answers to his work, (however ignorant he might be when he wrote it,) still giving the sanction of his authority to the supposition, that the order to M. Chauvelin to depart from this kingdom was the cause of the war between this country and France, I do feel it necessary to say a few words on that part of the subject.

Inaccuracy in dates seems to be a sort of fatality common to all who have written on that side of the question; for even the writer of the note to his Majesty is not more correct, in this respect, than if he had taken his information only from the pamphlet of the learned gentleman. The house will recollect the first professions of the French republic, which are enumerated, and enumerated truly, in that note—they are tests of every thing which would best recommend a government to the esteem and confidence of foreign powers, and the reverse of every thing which has been the system and practice of France now for near ten years. It is there stated, that their first principles were love of peace, aversion to conquest, and respect for the independence of other countries. In the same note, it seems indeed, admitted, that they since have violated all those principles; but it is alleged that they have done so, only in consequence of the provocation of other powers. One of the first of those provocations is stated to have consisted in the various outrages offered to their ministers, of which the example is said to have been set by the king of Great Britain in his conduct

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to M. Chauvelin. In answer to this supposition, it is only necessary to remark, that before the example was given, before Austria and Prussia are supposed to have been thus encouraged to combine in a plan for the partition of France; that plan, if it ever existed at all, had existed and been acted upon for above eight months: France and Prussia had been at war eight months before the dismissal of M. Chauvelin. So much for the accuracy of the statement.

[Mr. Erskine here observed that this was not the statement of his argument.]

I have been hitherto commenting on the arguments contained in the notes: I come now to those of the learned gentleman. I understand him to say, that the dismissal of M. Chauvelin was the real cause, I do not say of the general war, but of the rupture between France and England; and the learned gentleman states, particularly, that this dismissal rendered all discussion of the points in dispute impossible. Now I desire to meet distinctly every part of this assertion: I maintain, on the contrary, that an opportunity was given for discussing every matter in dispute between France and Great Britain, as fully as if a regular and accredited French minister had been resident here;—that the causes of war which existed at the beginning, or arose during the course of this discussion, were such as would have justified, twenty times over, a declaration of war on the part of this country;—that all the explanations on the part of France, were evidently unsatisfactory and inadmissible; and that M. Chauvelin had given in a peremptory ultimatum, declaring, that if these explanations were not received as sufficient, and if we did not immediately disarm, our refusal would be considered as a declaration of war.

After this followed that scene which no man can even now speak of without horror, or think of without indignation; that murder and regicide from which I was sorry to hear the learned gentleman date the beginning of the legal government of France.

Having thus given in their ultimatum, they added, as a further demand (while we were smarting under accumulated injuries, for

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which all satisfaction was denied) that we should instantly receive M. Chauvelin as their ambassador, with new credentials, representing them in the character which they had just derived from the murder of their sovereign. We replied, "he came here as the representative of a sovereign whom you have put to a cruel and illegal death; we have no satisfaction for the injuries we have received, no security from the danger with which we are threatened. Under these circumstances we will not receive your new credentials; the former credentials you have yourselves recalled by the sacrifice of your king."

What, from that moment, was the situation of M. Chauvelin? He was reduced to the situation of a private individual, and was required to quit the kingdom, under the provisions of the Alien Act, which, for the purpose of securing domestic tranquillity, had recently invested his Majesty with the power of removing out of this kingdom all foreigners suspected of revolutionary principles. Is it contended that he was, then, less liable to the provisions of that act than any other individual foreigner, whose conduct afforded to government just ground of objection or suspicion? Did his conduct and connexions here afford no such ground? or will it be pretended that the bare act of refusing to receive fresh credentials from an infant republic, not then acknowledged by any one power of Europe, and in the very act of heaping upon us injuries and insults, was of itself a cause of war? So far from it, that even the very nations of Europe, whose wisdom and moderation have been repeatedly extolled for maintaining neutrality, and preserving friendship, with the French republic, remained for years subsequent to this period, without receiving from it any accredited minister, or doing any one act to acknowledge its political existence. In answer to a representation from the belligerent powers, in December, 1793, Count Bernstorff, the minister of Denmark, officially declared, that "It was well known, that the national convention had appointed M. Grouville minister-plenipotentiary at Denmark, but that it was also well known, that he had neither been received nor acknowledged in that quality." And as late as February, 1796, when the same minister was at length, for the

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first time, received in his official capacity, Count Bernstorff, in a public note, assigned this reason for that change of conduct—"So long as no other than a revolutionary government existed in France, his Majesty could not acknowledge the minister of that government; but now that the French constitution is completely organized, and a regular government established in France, his Majesty's obligation ceases in that respect, and M. Grouville will therefore be acknowledged in the usual form." How far the court of Denmark was justified in the opinion, that a revolutionary government then no longer existed in France, it is not now necessary to inquire; but whatever may have been the fact, in that respect, the principle on which they acted is clear and intelligible, and is a decisive instance in favour of the proposition which I have maintained.

Is it then necessary to examine what were the terms of that ultimatum, with which we refused to comply? Acts of hostility had been openly threatened against our allies; an hostility founded upon the assumption of a right which would at once supersede the whole law of nations:—a demand was made by France upon Holland, to open the navigation of the Scheldt, on the ground of a general and national right, in violation of positive treaty; this claim we discussed, at the time, not so much on account of its immediate importance (though it was important both in a maritime and commercial view), as on account of the general principle on which it was founded. On the same arbitrary notion they soon afterwards discovered that sacred law of nature, which made the Rhine and the Alps the legitimate boundaries of France, and assumed the power which they have affected to exercise through the whole of the revolution, of superseding, by a new code of their own, all the recognised principles of the law of nations. They were actually advancing towards the republic of Holland, by rapid strides, after the victory of Jemappe, and they had ordered their generals to pursue the Austrian troops into any neutral country; thereby explicitly avowing an intention of invading Holland. They had already shewn their moderation and self-denial, by incorporating Belgium with the French republic. These lovers of

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peace, who set out with a sworn aversion to conquest, and professions of respect for the independence of other nations; who pretend that they departed from this system, only in consequence of your aggression, themselves in time of peace while you were still confessedly neutral, without the pretence or shadow of provocation, wrested Savoy from the king of Sardinia, and had proceeded to incorporate it likewise with France. These were their aggressions at this period; and more than these. They had issued an universal declaration of war against all the thrones of Europe; and they had, by their conduct, applied it particularly and specifically to you; they had passed the decree of the 19th of November, 1792, proclaiming the promise of French succour to all nations who should manifest a wish to become free; they had, by all their language, as well as their example, shewn what they understood to be freedom: they had sealed their principles by the deposition of their sovereign: they had applied them to England, by inviting and encouraging the addresses of those seditious and traitorous societies, who, from the beginning, favoured their views, and who, encouraged by your forbearance, were even then publicly avowing French doctrines, and anticipating their success in this country; who were hailing the progress of those proceedings in France, which led to the murder of its king: they were even then looking to the day when they should behold a national convention in England, formed upon similar principles.

And what were the explanations they offered on these different grounds of offence? As to Holland; they contented themselves with telling us, that the Scheldt was too insignificant for us to trouble ourselves about, and therefore it was to be decided as they chose, in breach of a positive treaty, which they had themselves guaranteed, and which we, by our alliance, were bound to support. If, however, after the war was over, Belgium should have consolidated its liberty (a term of which we now know the meaning, from the fate of every nation into which the arms of France have penetrated), then Belgium and Holland might, if they pleased, settle the question of the Scheldt, by separate negociation between themselves. With respect to aggrandizement, they as-

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sured us, that they would retain possession of Belgium by arms no longer than they should find it necessary for the purpose already stated of consolidating its liberty. And with respect to the decree of the 19th of November, applied as it was pointedly to you, by all the intercourse I have stated with all the seditious and traitorous part of this country, and particularly by the speeches of every leading man among them, they contented themselves with asserting, that the declaration conveyed no such meaning as was imputed to it, and that, so far from encouraging sedition, it could apply only to countries where a great majority of the people should have already declared itself in favour of a revolution; a supposition which, as they asserted, necessarily implied a total absence of all sedition.

What would have been the effect of admitting this explanation? —to suffer a nation, and an armed nation, to preach to the inhabitants of all the countries in the world, that themselves were slaves, and their rulers tyrants: to encourage and invite them to revolution, by a previous promise of French support, to whatever might call itself a majority, or to whatever France might declare to be so. This was their explanation; and this they told you, was their ultimatum.

But was this all? Even at that very moment, when they were endeavouring to induce you to admit these explanations, to be contented with the avowal, that France offered herself as a general guarantee for every successful revolution, and would interfere only to sanction and confirm whatever the free and uninfluenced choice of the people might have decided, what were their orders to their generals on the same subject? In the midst of these amicable explanations with you, came forth a decree, which I really believe must be effaced from the minds of gentlemen opposite to me, if they can prevail upon themselves for a moment to hint even a doubt upon the origin of this quarrel, not only as to this country, but as to all the nations of Europe with whom France has been subsequently engaged in hostility. I speak of the decree of the 15th of December. This decree, more even than all the previous transactions, amounted to an

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universal declaration of war against all thrones, and against all civilized governments. It said, wherever the armies of France shall come (whether within countries then at war or at peace is not distinguished), in all those countries it shall be the first care of their generals to introduce the principles and the practice of the French revolution; to demolish all privileged orders, and every thing which obstructs the establishment of their new system.

If any doubt is entertained, whither the armies of France were intended to come, if it is contended that they referred only to those nations with whom they were then at war, or with whom, in the course of this contest, they might be driven into war; let it be remembered, that, at this very moment, they had actually given orders to their generals to pursue the Austrian army from the Netherlands into Holland, with whom they were at that time in peace. Or, even if the construction contended for is admitted, let us see what would have been its application; let us look at the list of their aggressions, which was read by my right honourable friend * near me. With whom have they been at war since the period of this declaration? With all the nations of Europe save two†, and if not with those two, it is only because, with every provocation that could justify defensive war, those countries have hitherto acquiesced in repeated violations of their rights, rather than recur to war for their vindication. Wherever their arms have been carried, it will be a matter of short subsequent inquiry to trace whether they have faithfully applied these principles. If in terms, this decree is a denunciation of war against all governments; if in practice, it has been applied against every one with which France has come into contact; what is it but the deliberate code of the French revolution, from the birth of the republic, which has never once been departed from, which has been enforced with unremitted rigour against all the nations that have come into their power?

If there could otherwise be any doubt whether the application of this decree was intended to be universal, whether it applied to all nations, and to England particularly; there is one circum-

* Mr. Dundas. † Sweden and Denmark.

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stance which alone would be decisive — that nearly at the same period it was proposed, in the national convention*, to declare expressly, that the decree of the nineteenth of November was confined to the nations with whom they were then at war; and that proposal was rejected by a great majority of that very convention from whom we were desired to receive these explanations as satisfactory.

Such, Sir, was the nature of the system. Let us examine a little farther, whether it was from the beginning intended to be acted upon, in the extent which I have stated. At the very moment when their threats appeared to many little else than the ravings of madmen, they were digesting and methodizing the means of execution, as accurately as if they had actually foreseen the extent to which they have since been able to realize their criminal projects; they sat down coolly to devise the most regular and effectual mode of making the application of this system the current business of the day, and incorporating it with the general orders of their army; for (will the house believe it?) this confirmation of the decree of the nineteenth of November, was accompanied by an exposition and commentary addressed to the general of every army of France, containing a schedule as coolly conceived, and as methodically reduced, as any by which the most quiet business of a justice of peace, or the most regular routine of any department of state in this country could be conducted. Each commander was furnished with one general blank formula of a letter for all the nations of the world! The people of France to the people of . . . . . greeting: "We are come to expel your tyrants." Even this was not all; one of the articles of the decree of the fifteenth of December was expressly, "that those who should shew themselves so brutish and so enamoured of their chains as to refuse the restoration of their rights, to renounce liberty and equality, or to preserve, recall, or treat with their Prince or privileged orders, were not entitled to the distinction which France, in other cases, had justly established between government and people; and that such a people ought to be treated

* On a motion of M. Baraillon.

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according to the rigour of war, and of conquest*." Here is their love of peace; here is their aversion to conquest; here is their respect for the independence of other nations!

It was then, after receiving such explanations as these, after receiving the ultimatum of France, and after M. Chauvelin's credentials had ceased, that he was required to depart. Even after that period, I am almost ashamed to record it, we did not on our part shut the door against other attempts to negociate; but this transaction was immediately followed by the declaration of war, proceeding not from England in vindication of its rights, but from France as the completion of the injuries and insults they had offered. And on a war thus originating, can it be doubted, by an English house of commons, whether the aggression was on the part of this country, or of France? or whether the manifest aggression on the part of France was the result of any thing but the principles which characterize the French revolution?

What then are the resources and subterfuges by which those who agree with the learned gentleman are prevented from sinking under the force of this simple statement of facts? None but what are found in the insinuation contained in the note from France, that this country had, previous to the transactions to which I have referred, encouraged and supported the combination of other powers directed against them.

Upon this part of the subject, the proofs which contradict such an insinuation are innumerable. In the first place, the evidence of dates; in the second place, the admission of all the different parties in France; of the friends of Brissot charging on Robespierre the war with this country, and of the friends of Robespierre charging it on Brissot; but both acquitting England; the testimonies of the French government during the whole interval, since the declaration of Pilnitz, and the date assigned to the pretended treaty of Pavia; the first of which had not the slightest relation to any project of partition or dismemberment; the second of which I firmly believe to be an absolute fabrication and forgery; and in neither of which, even as they are represented, any reason has

* Vide Decree of 15th December, 1792.

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been assigned for believing that this country had any share. Even M. Talleyrand himself was sent by the constitutional king of the French, after the period when that concert, which is now charged, must have existed, if it existed at all, with a letter from the King of France, expressly thanking his Majesty for the neutrality which he had uniformly observed. The same fact is confirmed by the concurring evidence of every person who knew any thing of the plans of the King of Sweden in 1791; the only sovereign who, I believe, at that time meditated any hostile measures against France, and whose utmost hopes were expressly stated to be, that England would not oppose his intended expedition; by all those, also, who knew any thing of the conduct of the Emperor, or the King of Prussia; by the clear and decisive testimony of M. Chauvelin himself, in his dispatches from hence to the French government, since published by their authority; by every thing which has occurred since the war; by the publications of Dumourier; by the publications of Brissot; by the facts that have since come to light in America, with respect to the mission of M. Ganet; which shew that hostility against this country was decided on the part of France long before the period when M. Chauvelin was sent from hence. Besides this, the reduction of our peace establishment in the year 1791, and continued to the subsequent year, is a fact from which the inference is indisputable; a fact which, I am afraid, shews, not only that we were not waiting for the occasion of war, but that, in our partiality for a pacific system, we had indulged ourselves in a fond and credulous security, which wisdom and discretion would not have dictated. In addition to every other proof, it is singular enough, that in a decree, on the eve of the declaration of war on the part of France, it is expressly stated, as for the first time, that England was then departing from that system of neutrality *which she had hitherto observed.*

But, Sir, I will not rest merely on these testimonies or arguments, however strong and decisive. I assert distinctly and positively, and I have the documents in my hand to prove it, that from the middle of the year 1791, upon the first rumour of any measure taken by the Emperor of Germany, and till late in the year

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1792, we not only were no parties to any of the projects imputed to the Emperor, but, from the political circumstances in which we then stood with relation to that court, we wholly declined all communications with him on the subject of France. To Prussia, with whom we were in connexion, and still more decisively to Holland, with whom we were in close and intimate correspondence, we uniformly stated our unalterable resolution to maintain neutrality, and avoid interference in the internal affairs of France, as long as France should refrain from hostile measures against us and our allies. No minister of England had any authority to treat with foreign states, even provisionally, for any warlike concert, till after the battle of Jemappe; till a period subsequent to the repeated provocations which had been offered to us, and subsequent particularly to the decree of fraternity of the 19th of November; even then, to what object was it that the concert which we wish to establish was to be directed? If we had then rightly cast the true character of the French revolution, I cannot now deny that we should have been better justified in a very different conduct. But it is material to the present argument to declare what that conduct actually was, because it is of itself sufficient to confute all the pretexts by which the advocates of France have so long laboured to perplex the question of aggression.

At that period, Russia had at length conceived, as well as ourselves, a natural and just alarm for the balance of Europe, and applied to us to learn our sentiments on the subject. In our answer to this application, we imparted to Russia the principles upon which we then acted, and we communicated this answer to Prussia, with whom we were connected in defensive alliance. I will state shortly the leading part of those principles. A dispatch was sent from Lord Grenville to his Majesty's minister in Russia, dated the 29th of December, 1792, stating a desire to have an explanation set on foot on the subject of the war with France. I will read the material parts of it.

"The two leading points on which such explanation will naturally turn, are the line of conduct to be followed previous to the commencement of hostilities, and with a view, if possible, to

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avert them; and the nature and amount of the forces which the powers engaged in this concert might be enabled to use, supposing such extremities unavoidable.

"With respect to the first, it appears on the whole, subject however to future consideration and discussion with the other powers, that the most adviseable step to be taken would be, that sufficient explanation should be had with the powers at war with France, in order to enable those, not hitherto engaged in the war, to propose to that country terms of peace. That these terms should be, the withdrawing their arms within the limits of the French territory; the abandoning their conquests; the rescinding any acts injurious to the sovereignty or rights of any other nations, and the giving in some public and unequivocal manner a pledge of their intention no longer to foment troubles, or to excite disturbances against other governments. In return for these stipulations, the different powers of Europe, who should be parties to this measure, might engage to abandon all measures, or views of hostility against France, or interference in their internal affairs, and to maintain a correspondence and intercourse of amity with the existing powers in that country, with whom such a treaty may be concluded. If, on the result of this proposal so made by the powers acting in concert, these terms should not be accepted by France, or being accepted, should not be satisfactorily performed, the different powers might then engage themselves to each other to enter into active measures, for the purpose of obtaining the ends in view; and it may be to be considered, whether, in such case, they might not reasonably look to some indemnity for the expenses and hazards to which they would necessarily be exposed."

The dispatch then proceeded to the second point, that of the forces to be employed, on which it is unnecessary now to speak.

Now, Sir, I would really ask any person who has been, from the beginning, the most desirous of avoiding hostilities, whether it is possible to conceive any measure to be adopted in the situation in which we then stood, which could more evidently demonstrate our desire, after repeated provocations, to preserve peace, on any terms consistent with our safety; or whether any sentiment could

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now be suggested which would have more plainly marked our moderation, forbearance, and sincerity? In saying this, I am not challenging the applause and approbation of my country, because I must now confess that we were too slow in anticipating that danger of which we had, perhaps, even then sufficient experience, though far short, indeed, of that which we now possess, and that we might even then have seen, what facts have since but too incontestably proved, that nothing but vigorous and open hostility can afford complete and adequate security against revolutionary principles, while they retain a proportion of power sufficient to furnish the means of war.

I will enlarge no farther on the origin of the war. I have read and detailed to you a system which was in itself a declaration of war against all nations, which was so intended, and which has been so applied, which has been exemplified in the extreme peril and hazard of almost all who for a moment have trusted to treaty, and which has not at this hour overwhelmed Europe in one indiscriminate mass of ruin, only because we have not indulged, to a fatal extremity, that disposition, which we have however indulged too far; because we have not consented to trust to profession and compromise, rather than to our own valour and exertion, for security against a system, from which we never shall be delivered, till either the principle is extinguished, or till its strength is exhausted.

I might, Sir, if I found it necessary, enter into much detail upon this part of the subject; but at present I only beg leave to express my readiness at any time to enter upon it, when either my own strength, or the patience of the house will admit of it; but, I say, without distinction, against every nation in Europe, and against some out of Europe, the principle has been faithfully applied. You cannot look at the map of Europe, and lay your hand upon that country against which France has not either declared an open and aggressive war, or violated some positive treaty, or broken some recognized principle of the law of nations.

This subject may be divided into various periods. There were some acts of hostility committed previous to the war with this

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country, and very little indeed subsequent to that declaration, which abjured the love of conquest.' The attack upon the Papal State, by the seizure of Avignon, in 1791, was accompanied by a series of the most atrocious crimes and outrages that ever disgraced a revolution. Avignon was separated from its lawful sovereign, with whom not even the pretence of quarrel existed, and forcibly incorporated in the tyranny of one and indivisible France. The same system led, in the same year, to an aggression against the whole German empire, by the seizure of Porentrui, part of the dominions of the bishop of Basle. Afterwards, in 1792, unpreceded by any declaration of war, or any cause of hostility, and in direct violation of the solemn pledge to abstain from conquest, an attack was made upon the king of Sardinia, by the seizure of Savoy, for the purpose of incorporating it, in like manner, with France. In the same year, they had proceeded to the declaration of war against Austria, against Prussia, and against the German empire, in which they have been justified only on a ground of rooted hostility, combination, and league of sovereigns, for the dismemberment of France. I say, that some of the documents, brought to support this pretence, are spurious and false; I say, that even in those that are not so, there is not one word to prove the charge principally relied upon, that of an intention to effect the dismemberment of France, or to impose upon it, by force, any particular constitution. I say, that as far as we have been able to trace what passed at Pilnitz, the declaration there signed referred to the imprisonment of Louis XVI; its immediate view was to effect his deliverance, if a concert sufficiently extensive could be formed with other sovereigns, for that purpose. It left the internal state of France to be decided by the king restored to his liberty, with the free consent of the states of his kingdom, and it did not contain one word relative to the dismemberment of France.

In the subsequent discussions which took place in 1792, and which embraced at the same time, all the other points of jealousy which had arisen between the two countries, the declaration of Pilnitz was referred to, and explained on the part of Austria in a

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manner precisely conformable to what I have now stated; and the amicable explanations which took place, both on this subject and on all the matters in dispute, will be found in the official correspondence between the two courts, which has been made public; and it will be found also, that, as long as the negociation continued to be conducted through M. Delessart, then minister for foreign affairs, there was a great prospect that those discussions would be amicably terminated; but it is notorious, and has since been clearly proved, on the authority of Brissot himself, that the violent party in France considered such an issue of the negociation as likely to be fatal to their projects, and thought, to use his own words, that "war was necessary to consolidate the revolution." For the express purpose of producing the war, they excited a popular tumult in Paris; they insisted upon and obtained the dismissal of M. Delessart. A new minister was appointed in his room, the tone of the negociation was immediately changed, and an ultimatum was sent to the emperor, similar to that which was afterwards sent to this country, affording him no satisfaction on his just grounds of complaint, and requiring him, under those circumstances, to disarm. The first events of the contest proved how much more France was prepared for war than Austria, and afford a strong confirmation of the proposition which I maintain; that no offensive intention was entertained on the part of the latter power.

War was then declared against Austria; a war which I state to be a war of aggression on the part of France. The king of Prussia had declared, that he should consider war against the emperor or empire, as war against himself. He had declared, that, as a co-estate of the empire, he was determined to defend their rights; that, as an ally of the emperor, he would support him to the utmost against any attack; and that, for the sake of his own dominions, he felt himself called upon to resist the progress of French principles, and to maintain the balance of power in Europe. With this notice before them, France declared war upon the emperor, and the war with Prussia was the necessary consequence of this aggression, both against the emperor and the empire.

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The war against the king of Sardinia follows next. The declaration of that war was the seizure of Savoy, by an invading army; and on what ground? On that which has been stated already. They had found out, by some light of nature, that the Rhine and the Alps were the natural limits of France. Upon that ground Savoy was seized; and Savoy was also incorporated with France.

Here finishes the history of the wars in which France was engaged, antecedent to the war with Great Britain, with Holland, and with Spain. With respect to Spain, we have seen nothing in any part of its conduct, which leads us to suspect, that either attachment to religion, or the ties of consanguinity, or regard to the ancient system of Europe, was likely to induce that court to connect itself in offensive war against France. The war was evidently and incontestably begun by France against Spain.

The case of Holland is so fresh in every man's recollection, and so connected with the immediate causes of the war with this country, that it cannot require one word of observation. What shall I say then on the case of Portugal? I cannot indeed say, that France ever declared war against that country; I can hardly say even that she ever made war, but she required them to make a treaty of peace, as if they had been at war; she obliged them to purchase that treaty; she broke it as soon as it was purchased, and she had originally no other ground of complaint than this,—that Portugal had performed, though inadequately, the engagement of its ancient defensive alliance with this country, in the character of an auxiliary; a conduct which cannot of itself make any power a principal in a war.

I have now enumerated all the nations at war at that period, with the exception only of Naples. It can hardly be necessary to call to the recollection of the house, the characteristic feature of revolutionary principles which was shewn, even at this early period, in the personal insult offered to the king of Naples, by the commander of a French squadron, riding uncontrouled in the Mediterranean, and (while our fleets were yet unarmed) threatening destruction to all the coast of Italy.

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It was not till a considerably later period that almost all the other nations of Europe found themselves equally involved in actual hostility: but it is not a little material to the whole of my argument, compared with the statement of the learned gentleman, and with that contained in the French note, to examine at what period this hostility extended itself. It extended itself, in the course of 1796, to the states of Italy which had hitherto been exempted from it. In 1797, it had ended in the destruction of most of them; it had ended in the virtual deposition of the king of Sardinia, it had ended in the conversion of Genoa and Tuscany into democratic republics; it had ended in the revolution of Venice, in the violation of treaties with the new Venetian republic; and finally, in transferring that very republic, the creature and vassal of France, to the dominion of Austria.

I observe from the gestures of some honourable gentlemen, that they think we are precluded from the use of any argument founded on this last transaction. I already hear them saying, that it was as criminal in Austria to receive, as it was in France to give. I am far from defending or palliating the conduct of Austria upon this occasion: but because Austria, unable at last to contend with the arms of France, was forced to accept an unjust and insufficient indemnification from the conquests France had made from it, are we to be debarred from stating what, on the part of France, was not merely an unjust acquisition, but an act of the grossest and most aggravated perfidy and cruelty, and one of the most striking specimens of that system which has been uniformly and indiscriminately applied to all the countries which France has had within its grasp? This can only be said in vindication of France (and it is still more a vindication of Austria), that, practically speaking, if there is any part of this transaction for which Venice itself has reason to be grateful, it can only be for the permission to exchange the embraces of French fraternity for what is called the despotism of Vienna.

Let these facts, and these dates, be compared with what we have heard. The honourable gentleman has told us, and the author of the note from France has told us also, that all the French

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conquests were produced by the operations of the allies. It was when they were pressed on all sides, when their own territory was in danger, when their own independence was in question, when the confederacy appeared too strong; it was then they used the means with which their power and their courage furnished them; and, "attacked upon all sides, they carried every where their defensive arms."* I do not wish to misrepresent the learned gentleman, but I understood him to speak of this sentiment with approbation: the sentiment itself is this, that if a nation is unjustly attacked in any one quarter by others, she cannot stop to consider by whom, but must find means of strength in other quarters, no matter where; and is justified in attacking, in her turn, those with whom she is at peace, and from whom she has received no species of provocation.

Sir, I hope I have already proved, in a great measure, that no such attack was made upon France; but if it was made, I maintain, that the whole ground on which that argument is founded cannot be tolerated. In the name of the laws of nature and nations, in the name of every thing that is sacred and honourable, I demur to that plea, and I tell that honourable and learned gentleman that he would do well, to look again into the law of nations, before he ventures to come to this house to give the sanction of his authority to so dreadful and execrable a system.

[Mr. Erskine here said across the house, that he had never maintained such a proposition.]

I certainly understood this to be distinctly the tenour of the learned gentleman's argument; but as he tells me he did not use it, I take it for granted he did not intend to use it: I rejoice that he did not: but, at least, then I have a right to expect, that the learned gentleman should now transfer to the French note some of the indignation which he has hitherto lavished upon the declarations of this country. This principle, which the learned gentleman disclaims, the French note avows: and I contend, without the fear of contradiction, it is the principle upon which France has uniformly acted. But while the learned gentleman disclaims

* Vide M. Talleyrand's note.

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this proposition, he certainly will admit, that he has himself asserted, and maintained in the whole course of his argument, that the pressure of the war upon France, imposed upon her the necessity of those exertions which produced most of the enormities of the revolution, and most of the enormities practised against the other countries of Europe. The house will recollect, that, in the year 1796, when all these horrors in Italy were beginning, which are the strongest illustrations of the general character of the French revolution, we had begun that negociation to which the learned gentleman has referred. England then possessed numerous conquests; England, though not having at that time had the advantage of three of her most splendid victories, England, even then, appeared undisputed mistress of the sea; England, having then engrossed the whole wealth of the colonial world; England, having lost nothing of its original possessions; England then comes forward, proposing general peace, and offering—what? offering the surrender of all that it had acquired, in order to obtain—what? not the dismemberment, not the partition of ancient France, but the return of a part of those conquests, no one of which could be retained, but in direct contradiction to that original and solemn pledge which is now referred to, as the proof of the just and moderate disposition of the French republic. Yet even this offer was not sufficient to procure peace, or to arrest the progress of France in her defensive operations against other unoffending countries. From the pages, however, of the learned gentleman's pamphlet (which, after all its editions, is now fresher in his memory than in that of any other person in this house, or in the country), he is furnished with an argument on the result of the negociation, on which he appears confidently to rely. He maintains, that the single point on which the negociation was broken off, was the question of the possession of the Austrian Netherlands; and that it is, therefore, on that ground only, that the war has, since that time, been continued. When this subject was before under discussion, I stated, and I shall state again (notwithstanding the learned gentleman's accusation of my having endeavoured to shift the question from its true point), that the

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question, then at issue, was not, whether the Netherlands should, in fact, be restored; though even on that question I am not, like the learned gentleman, unprepared to give any opinion; I am ready to say, that to leave that territory in the possession of France would be obviously dangerous to the interests of this country, and is inconsistent with the policy which it has uniformly pursued, at every period in which it has concerned itself in the general system of the continent; but it was not on the decision of this question of expediency and policy, that the issue of the negociation then turned; what was required of us by France was, not merely that we should acquiesce in her retaining the Netherlands, but that, as a preliminary to all treaty, and before entering upon the discussion of terms, we should recognize the principle, that whatever France, in time of war, had annexed to the republic, must remain inseparable for ever, and could not become the subject of negociation. I say, that, in refusing such a preliminary, we were only resisting the claim of France, to arrogate to itself the power of controlling, by its own separate and municipal acts, the rights and interests of other countries, and moulding, at its discretion, a new and general code of the law of nations.

In reviewing the issue of this negociation, it is important to observe, that France, who began by abjuring a love of conquest, was desired to give up nothing of her own, not even to give up all that she had conquered; that it was offered to her to receive back all that had been conquered from her; and when she rejected the negociation for peace upon these grounds, are we then to be told of the unrelenting hostility of the combined powers, for which France was to revenge itself upon other countries, and which is to justify the subversion of every established government, and the destruction of property, religion, and domestic comfort, from one end of Italy to the other? Such was the effect of the war against Modena, against Genoa, against Tuscany, against Venice, against Rome, and against Naples; all of which she engaged in, or prosecuted, subsequent to this very period.

After this, in the year 1797, Austria had made peace, Eng-

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land, and its ally Portugal (from whom we could expect little active assistance, but whom we felt it our duty to defend), alone remained in the war. In that situation, under the pressure of necessity, which I shall not disguise, we made another attempt to negociate. In 1797, Prussia, Spain, Austria, and Naples, having successively made peace, the princes of Italy having been destroyed, France having surrounded itself, in almost every part in which it is not surrounded by the sea, with revolutionary republics, England made another offer of a different nature. It was not now a demand that France should restore any thing. Austria having made peace upon her own terms, England had nothing to require with regard to her allies; she asked no restitution of the dominions added to France in Europe. So far from retaining any thing French out of Europe, we freely offered them all, demanding only, as a poor compensation, to retain a part of what we had acquired by arms, from Holland, then identified with France, and that part, useless to Holland, and necessary for the security of our Indian possessions. This proposal also, Sir, was proudly refused, in a way which the learned gentleman himself has not attempted to justify, indeed of which he has spoken with detestation. I wish, since he has not finally abjured his duty in this house, that that detestation had been stated earlier, that he had mixed his own voice with the general voice of his country, on the result of that negociation.

Let us look at the conduct of France immediately subsequent to this period. She had spurned at the offers of Great Britain; she had reduced her continental enemies to the necessity of accepting a precarious peace; she had (in spite of those pledges repeatedly made and uniformly violated) surrounded herself by new conquests, on every part of her frontier but one; that one was Switzerland. The first effect of being relieved from the war with Austria, of being secured against all fears of continental invasion on the antient territory of France, was their unprovoked attack against this unoffending and devoted country. This was one of the scenes which satisfied even those who were the most incredulous,

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that France had thrown off the mask, "*if indeed she had ever worn it.*"* It collected, in one view, many of the characteristic features of that revolutionary system which I have endeavoured to trace. The perfidy which alone rendered their arms successful, the pretext of which they availed themselves to produce division and prepare the entrance of jacobinism in that country, the proposal of armistice, one of the known and regular engines of the revolution, which was, as usual, the immediate prelude to military execution, attended with cruelty and barbarity, of which there are few examples: all these are known to the world. The country they attacked was one which had long been the faithful ally of France, which, instead of giving cause of jealousy to any other power, had been, for ages, proverbial for the simplicity and innocence of its manners, and which had acquired and preserved the esteem of all the nations of Europe; which had almost, by the common consent of mankind, been exempted from the sound of war, and marked out as a land of Goshen, safe and untouched in the midst of surrounding calamities.

Look then at the fate of Switzerland, at the circumstances which led to its destruction, add this instance to the catalogue of aggression against all Europe, and then tell me, whether the system I have described has not been prosecuted with an unrelenting spirit, which cannot be subdued in adversity, which cannot be appeased in prosperity, which neither solemn professions, nor the general law of nations, nor the obligation of treaties (whether previous to the revolution or subsequent to it), could restrain from the subversion of every state into which, either by force or fraud, their arms could penetrate. Then tell me, whether the disasters of Europe are to be charged upon the provocation of this country and its allies, or on the inherent principle of the French revolution, of which the natural result produced so much misery and carnage in France, and carried desolation and terror over so large a portion of the world.

Sir, much as I have now stated, I have not finished the catalogue. America almost as much as Switzerland, perhaps, con-

* Vide Speeches at the Whig Club.

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tributed to that change, which has taken place in the minds of those who were originally partial to the principles of the French government. The hostility against America followed a long course of neutrality adhered to, under the strongest provocations, or rather of repeated compliance to France, with which we might well have been dissatisfied. It was on the face of it, unjust and wanton; and it was accompanied by those instances of sordid corruption which shocked and disgusted even the enthusiastic admirers of revolutionary purity, and threw a new light on the genius of revolutionary government.

After this, it remains only shortly to remind gentlemen of the aggression against Egypt, not omitting, however, to notice the capture of Malta, in the way to Egypt. Inconsiderable as that island may be thought, compared with the scenes we have witnessed, let it be remembered, that it is an island of which the government had long been recognized by every state of Europe, against which France pretended no cause of war, and whose independence was as dear to itself and as sacred as that of any country in Europe. It was in fact not unimportant from its local situation to the other powers of Europe, but in proportion as any man may diminish its importance, the instance will only serve the more to illustrate and confirm the proposition which I have maintained.—The all-searching eye of the French revolution looks to every part of Europe, and every quarter of the world, in which can be found an object either of acquisition or plunder. Nothing is too great for the temerity of its ambition, nothing too small or insignificant for the grasp of its rapacity. From hence Buonaparté and his army proceeded to Egypt. The attack was made, pretences were held out to the natives of that country in the name of the French king, whom they had murdered; they pretended to have the approbation of the grand seignior, whose territories they were violating; their project was carried on under the profession of a zeal for Mahometanism; it was carried on by proclaiming that France had been reconciled to the Mussulman faith, had abjured that of Christianity, or, as he in his impious language termed it, of "*the sect of the Messiah.*"

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The only plea which they have since held out to colour this atrocious invasion of a neutral and friendly territory, is, that it was the road to attack the English power in India. It is most unquestionably true, that this was one and a principal cause of this unparalleled outrage; but another, and an equally substantial cause (as appears by their own statements), was the division and partition of the territories of what they thought a falling power. It is impossible to dismiss this subject without observing that this attack against Egypt was accompanied by an attack upon the British possessions in India, made on true revolutionary principles. In Europe, the propagation of the principles of France had uniformly prepared the way for the progress of its arms. To India, the lovers of peace had sent the messengers of jacobinism, for the purpose of inculcating war in those distant regions, on jacobin principles, and of forming jacobin clubs, which they actually succeeded in establishing, and which in most respects resembled the European model, but which were distinguished by this peculiarity, that they were required to swear in one breath, *hatred to tyranny, the love of liberty, and the destruction of all kings and sovereigns—except the good and faithful ally of the French republic*, CITIZEN TIPPOO.

What then was the nature of this system? Was it any thing but what I have stated it to be; an insatiable love of aggrandizement, an implacable spirit of destruction directed against all the civil and religious institutions of every country? This is the first moving and acting spirit of the French revolution; this is the spirit which animated it at its birth, and this is the spirit which will not desert it till the moment of its dissolution, "which grew with its growth, which strengthened with its strength," but which has not abated under its misfortunes, nor declined in its decay; it has been invariably the same in every period, operating more or less, according as accident or circumstances might assist it; but it has been inherent in the revolution in all its stages, it has equally belonged to Brissot, to Robespierre, to Tallien, to Reubel, to Barras, and to every one of the leaders of the directory, but to none more than to Buonaparté, in whom now all their powers are united. What are

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its characters? Can it be accident that produced them? No, it is only from the alliance of the most horrid principles with the most horrid means, that such miseries could have been brought upon Europe. It is this paradox, which we must always keep in mind when we are discussing any question relative to the effects of the French revolution. Groaning under every degree of misery, the victim of its own crimes, and as I once before expressed it in this house, asking pardon of God and of man for the miseries which it has brought upon itself and others, France still retains (while it has neither left means of comfort, nor almost of subsistence to its own inhabitants) new and unexampled means of annoyance and destruction against all the other powers of Europe.

Its first fundamental principle was to bribe the poor against the rich, by proposing to transfer into new hands, on the delusive notion of equality, and in breach of every principle of justice, the whole property of the country; the practical application of this principle was to devote the whole of that property to indiscriminate plunder, and to make it the foundation of a revolutionary system of finance, productive in proportion to the misery and desolation which it created. It has been accompanied by an unwearied spirit of proselytism, diffusing itself over all the nations of the earth; a spirit which can apply itself to all circumstances and all situations, which can furnish a list of grievances, and hold out a promise of redress equally to all nations, which inspired the teachers of French liberty with the hope of alike recommending themselves to those who live under the feudal code of the German empire; to the various states of Italy, under all their different institutions; to the old republicans of Holland, and to the new republicans of America; to the catholic of Ireland, whom it was to deliver from protestant usurpation; to the protestant of Switzerland, whom it was to deliver from popish superstition; and to the mussulman of Egypt, whom it was to deliver from Christian persecution; to the remote Indian, blindly bigoted to his ancient institutions; and to the natives of Great Britain, enjoying the perfection of practical freedom, and justly attached to their constitution, from the joint result of habit, of reason, and of experience.

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The last and distinguishing feature is a perfidy, which nothing can bind, which no tie of treaty, no sense of the principles generally received among nations, no obligation, human or divine, can restrain. Thus qualified, thus armed for destruction, the genius of the French revolution marched forth, the terror and dismay of the world. Every nation has in its turn been the witness, many have been the victims of its principles, and it is left for us to decide, whether we will compromise with such a danger, while we have yet resources to supply the sinews of war, while the heart and spirit of the country is yet unbroken, and while we have the means of calling forth and supporting a powerful co-operation in Europe.

Much more might be said on this part of the subject; but if what I have said already is a faithful, though only an imperfect sketch of those excesses and outrages, which even history itself will hereafter be unable fully to record, and a just representation of the principle and source from which they originated, will any man say that we ought to accept a precarious security against so tremendous a danger? Much more will he pretend, after the experience of all that has passed, in the different stages of the French revolution, that we ought to be deterred from probing this great question to the bottom, and from examining, without ceremony or disguise, whether the change which has recently taken place in France, is sufficient now to give security, not against a common danger, but against such a danger as that which I have described?

In examining this part of the subject, let it be remembered, that there is one other characteristic of the French revolution, as striking as its dreadful and destructive principles, I mean the instability of its government, which has been of itself sufficient to destroy all reliance, if any such reliance could, at any time, have been placed on the good faith of any of its rulers. Such has been the incredible rapidity with which the revolutions in France have succeeded each other, that I believe the names of those who have successively exercised absolute power, under the pretence of liberty, are to be numbered by the years of the revolution; and

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each of the new constitutions, which, under the same pretence, has, in its turn, been imposed by force on France, every one of which alike was founded upon principles which professed to be universal, and was intended to be established and perpetuated among all the nations of the earth—each of these will be found, upon an average, to have had about two years, as the period of its duration.

Under this revolutionary system, accompanied with this perpetual fluctuation and change, both in the form of the government and in the persons of the rulers, what is the security which has hitherto existed, and what new security is now offered? Before an answer is given to this question, let me sum up the history of all the revolutionary governments of France, and of their characters in relation to other powers, in words more emphatical than any which I could use—the memorable words pronounced, on the eve of this last constitution, by the orator * who was selected to report to an assembly, surrounded by a file of grenadiers, the new form of liberty which it was destined to enjoy under the auspices of general Buonaparté. From this reporter, the mouth and organ of the new government, we learn this important lesson:—"It is easy to conceive why peace was not concluded before the establishment of the constitutional government. The only government which then existed, described itself as revolutionary; it was, in fact, only the tyranny of a few men who were soon overthrown by others, and it consequently presented no stability of principles or of views, no security either with respect to men, or with respect to things.

"It should seem that that stability and that security ought to have existed from the establishment, and as the effect, of the constitutional system; and yet they did not exist more, perhaps even less, than they had done before. In truth, we did make some partial treaties, we signed a continental peace, and a general congress was held to confirm it; but these treaties, these diplomatic con-

* Vide Speech of Boulay de la Meurthe; in the Council of Five Hundred, at St. Cloud, 19th Brumaire (9th November), 1799.

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ferences, appear to have been the source of a new war, more inveterate and more bloody than before.

"Before the 18th Fructidor (4th September) of the 5th year, the French government exhibited to foreign nation so uncertain an existence, that they refused to treat with it. After this great event, the whole power was absorbed in the Directory; the legislative body can hardly be said to have existed: treaties of peace were broken, and war carried every where, without that body having any share in those measures. The same Directory, after having intimidated all Europe, and destroyed, at its pleasure, several governments, neither knowing how to make peace or war, or how even to establish itself, was overturned by a breath, on the 13th Prairial (18th June), to make room for other men, influenced, perhaps, by different views, or who might be governed by different principles.

"Judging, then, only from notorious facts, the French government must be considered as exhibiting nothing fixed, neither in respect to men or to things."

Here, then, is the picture, down to the period of the last revolution, of the state of France, under all its successive governments!

Having taken a view of what it was, let us now examine what it is. In the first place, we see, as has been truly stated, a change in the description and form of the sovereign authority; a supreme power is placed at the head of this nominal republic, with a more open avowal of military despotism than at any former period; with a more open and undisguised abandonment of the names and pretences under which that despotism long attempted to conceal itself. The different institutions, republican in their form and appearance, which were before the instruments of that despotism, are now annihilated; they have given way to the absolute power of one man, concentrating in himself all the authority of the state, and differing from other monarchs only in this, that, as my honourable friend* truly stated it, he wields a sword instead of a sceptre. What then is the confidence we are to derive either from

* Mr. Canning.

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the frame of the government, or from the character and past conduct of the person who is now the absolute ruler of France?

Had we seen a man, of whom we had no previous knowledge, suddenly invested with the sovereign authority of the country; invested with the power of taxation, with the power of the sword, the power of war and peace, the unlimited power of commanding the resources, of disposing of the lives and fortunes of every man in France; if we had seen, at the same moment, all the inferior machinery of the revolution, which, under the variety of successive shocks, had kept the system in motion, still remaining entire, all that, by requisition and plunder, had given activity to the revolutionary system of finance, and had furnished the means of creating an army, by converting every man, who was of age to bear arms, into a soldier, not for the defence of his own country, but for the sake of carrying unprovoked war into surrounding countries; if we had seen all the subordinate instruments of jacobin power subsisting in their full force, and retaining (to use the French phrase) all their original organization; and had then observed this single change in the conduct of their affairs, that there was now one man with no rival to thwart his measures, no colleague to divide his powers, no council to control his operations, no liberty of speaking or writing, no expression of public opinion to check or influence his conduct; under such circumstances, should we be wrong to pause, or wait for the evidence of facts and experience, before we consented to trust our safety to the forbearance of a single man, in such a situation, and to relinquish those means of defence which have hitherto carried us safe through all the storms of the revolution? if we were to ask what are the principles and character of this stranger, to whom fortune has suddenly committed the concerns of a great and powerful nation?

But is this the actual state of the present question? Are we talking of a stranger of whom we have heard nothing? No, Sir; we have heard of him; we, and Europe, and the world, have heard both of him and of the satellites by whom he is surround-

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ed; and it is impossible to discuss fairly the propriety of any answer which could be returned to his overtures of negociation, without taking into consideration the inferences to be drawn from his personal character and conduct. I know it is the fashion with some gentlemen to represent any reference to topics of this nature as invidious and irritating; but the truth is, that they rise unavoidably out of the very nature of the question. Would it have been possible for ministers to discharge their duty, in offering their advice to their Sovereign, either for accepting or declining negociation, without taking into their account the reliance to be placed on the disposition and the principles of the person? on whose disposition and principles the security to be obtained by treaty must, in the present circumstances, principally depend? or would they act honestly or candidly towards parliament and towards the country, if, having been guided by these considerations, they forbore to state publicly and distinctly the real grounds which have influenced their decision; and if, from a false delicacy and groundless timidity, they purposely declined an examination of a point, the most essential towards enabling parliament to form a just determination on so important a subject?

What opinion, then, are we led to form of the pretensions of the Consul to those particular qualities which, in the official note, are represented as affording us, from his personal character, the surest pledge of peace? We are told, this is his *second attempt* at general pacification. Let us see, for a moment, how this *second attempt* has been conducted. There is, indeed, as the learned gentleman has said, a word in the first declaration which refers to general peace, and which states this to be the second time in which the Consul has endeavoured to accomplish that object. We thought fit, for the reasons which have been assigned, to decline altogether the proposal of treating, under the present circumstances; but we, at the same time, expressly stated, that, whenever the moment for treaty should arrive, we would in no case treat, but in conjunction with our allies. Our general refusal to negociate at the present moment did not prevent the Consul from renewing his overtures; but were they renewed for the purpose

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of general pacification? Though he had hinted at general peace in the terms of his first note; though we had shewn, by our answer, that we deemed negociation, even for general peace, at this moment, inadmissible; though we added, that, even at any future period, we would treat only in conjunction with our allies; what was the proposal contained in his last note?—To treat, not for *general peace*, but for a *separate peace* between Great Britain and France.

Such was the second attempt to effect *general pacification*: a proposal for a *separate* treaty with Great Britain. What had been the first?—The conclusion of a *separate* treaty with Austria; and, in addition to this fact, there are two anecdotes connected with the conclusion of this treaty, which are sufficient to illustrate the disposition of this pacificator of Europe. This very treaty of Campo Formio was ostentatiously professed to be concluded with the Emperor, for the purpose of enabling Buonaparte to take the command of the army of England, and to dictate a separate peace with this country on the banks of the Thames. But there is this additional circumstance, singular beyond all conception, considering that we are now referred to the treaty of Campo Formio as a proof of the personal disposition of the Consul to general peace: he sent his two confidential and chosen friends, *Berthier* and *Monge*, charged to communicate to the Directory this treaty of Campo Formio; to announce to them, that one enemy was humbled, that the war with Austria was terminated, and, therefore, that now was the moment to prosecute their operations against this country; they used, on this occasion, the memorable words, "*the Kingdom of Great Britain and the French republic cannot exist together.*" This, I say, was the solemn declaration of the deputies and ambassadors of Buonaparte himself, offering to the Directory the first fruits of this first attempt at general pacification.

So much for his disposition towards general pacification: let us look next at the part he has taken in the different stages of the French revolution, and let us then judge whether we are to look to him, as the security against revolutionary principles; let us de-

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termine what reliance we can place on his engagements with other countries, when we see how he has observed his engagements to his own. When the constitution of the third year was established under Barras, that constitution was imposed by the arms of Buonaparte, then commanding the army of the Triumvirate in Paris. To that constitution he then swore fidelity. How often he has repeated the same oath, I know not; but twice, at least, we know that he has not only repeated it himself, but tendered it to others, under circumstances too striking not to be stated.

Sir, the house cannot have forgotten the revolution of the fourth of September, which produced the dismissal of Lord Malmsbury from Lisle. How was that revolution procured? It was procured chiefly by the promise of Buonaparte (in the name of his army), decidedly to support the Directory in those measures which led to the infringement and violation of every thing that the authors of the constitution of 1795, or its adherents, could consider as fundamental, and which established a system of despotism inferior only to that now realized in his own person. Immediately before this event, in the midst of the desolation and bloodshed of Italy, he had received the sacred present of new banners from the Directory; he delivered them to his army with this exhortation: "Let us swear, fellow soldiers, by the manes of the patriots who have died by our side, eternal hatred to the enemies of the constitution of the third year:" That very constitution which he soon after enabled the Directory to violate, and which, at the head of his grenadiers, he has now finally destroyed. Sir, that oath was again renewed, in the midst of that very scene to which I have last referred; the oath of fidelity to the constitution of the third year was administered to all the members of the assembly then sitting (under the terror of the bayonet), as the solemn preparation for the business of the day; and the morning was ushered in with swearing attachment to the constitution, that the evening might close with its destruction.

If we carry our views out of France, and look at the dreadful catalogue of all the breaches of treaty, all the acts of perfidy at which I have only glanced, and which are precisely commensurate

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with the number of treaties which the republic have made (for I have sought in vain for any one which it has made and which it has not broken); if we trace the history of them all from the beginning of the revolution to the present time, or if we select those which have been accompanied by the most atrocious cruelty, and marked the most strongly with the characteristic features of the revolution, the name of Buonaparte will be found allied to more of them than that of any other that can be handed down in the history of the crimes and miseries of the last ten years. His name will be recorded with the horrors committed in Italy, in the memorable campaign of 1796 and 1797, in the Milanese, in Genoa, in Modena, in Tuscany, in Rome, and in Venice.

His entrance into Lombardy was announced by a solemn proclamation, issued on the 27th of April, 1796, which terminated with these words: "Nations of Italy! the French army is come to break your chains; the French are the friends of the people in every country; your religion, your property, your customs, shall be respected." This was followed by a second proclamation, dated from Milan, 20th of May, and signed "Buonaparte," in these terms: "Respect for property and personal security, respect for the religion of countries; these are the sentiments of the government of the French republic, and of the army of Italy. The French, victorious, consider the nations of Lombardy as their brothers." In testimony of this fraternity, and to fulfil the solemn pledge of respecting property, this very proclamation imposed on the Milanese a provisional contribution to the amount of twenty millions of livres, or near one million sterling; and successive exactions were afterwards levied on that single state to the amount, in the whole, of near six millions sterling. The regard to religion and to the customs of the country was manifested with the same scrupulous fidelity. The churches were given up to indiscriminate plunder. Every religious and charitable fund, every public treasure was confiscated. The country was made the scene of every species of disorder and rapine. The priests, the established form of worship, all the objects of religious reverence, were openly insulted by the French troops; at Pavia, particularly, the tomb

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of St. Augustine, which the inhabitants were accustomed to view with peculiar veneration, was mutilated and defaced. This last provocation having roused the resentment of the people, they flew to arms; surrounded the French garrison, and took them prisoners, but carefully abstained from offering any violence to a single soldier. In revenge for this conduct, Buonaparte, then on his march to the Mincio, suddenly returned, collected his troops, and carried the extremity of military execution over the country: he burnt the town of Benasco, and massacred eight hundred of its inhabitants; he marched to Pavia, took it by storm, and delivered it over to general plunder, and published, at the same moment, a proclamation, of the 26th of May, ordering his troops to shoot all those who had not laid down their arms, and taken an oath of obedience, and to burn every village where the *tocsin* should be sounded, and to put its inhabitants to death.

The transactions with Modena were on a smaller scale, but in the same character. Buonaparte began by signing a treaty, by which the duke of Modena was to pay twelve millions of livres, and neutrality was promised him in return; this was soon followed by the personal arrest of the duke, and by a fresh extortion of two hundred thousand sequins; after this he was permitted, on the payment of a further sum, to sign another treaty, called a *Convention de Sureté*, which was of course was only the prelude to the repetition of similar exactions.

Nearly at the same period, in violation of the rights of neutrality, and of the treaty which had been concluded between the French republic and the grand duke of Tuscany in the preceding year, and in breach of a positive promise given only a few days before, the French army forcibly took possession of Leghorn, for the purpose of seizing the British property which was deposited there, and confiscating it as prize; and shortly after, when Buonaparte agreed to evacuate Leghorn in return for the evacuation of the island of Elbe, which was in the possession of the British troops, he insisted upon a separate article, by which, in addition to the plunder before obtained, by the infraction of the law of nations, it was stipulated, that the grand duke should pay

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to the French the expense, which they had incurred by this invasion of his territory.

In the proceedings towards Genoa, we shall find not only a continuation of the same system of extortion and plunder (in violation of the solemn pledge contained in the proclamations already referred to), but a striking instance of the revolutionary means employed for the destruction of independent governments. A French minister was at that time resident at Genoa, which was acknowledged by France to be in a state of neutrality and friendship: in breach of this neutrality, Buonaparte began, in the year 1796, with the demand of a loan; he afterwards, from the month of September, required and enforced the payment of a monthly subsidy, to the amount which he thought proper to stipulate; these exactions were accompanied by repeated assurances and protestations of friendship; they were followed, in May 1797, by a conspiracy against the government, fomented by the emissaries of the French embassy, and conducted by the partisans of France, encouraged and afterwards protected by the French minister. The conspirators failed in their first attempt; overpowered by the courage and voluntary exertions of the inhabitants, their force was dispersed, and many of their number were arrested. Buonaparte instantly considered the defeat of the conspirators as an act of aggression against the French republic; he dispatched an aid-de-camp with an order to the senate of this independent state; first, to release all the French who were detained; secondly, to punish those who had arrested them; thirdly, to declare that they had had no share in the insurrection; and fourthly, to disarm the people. Several French prisoners were immediately released, and a proclamation was preparing to disarm the inhabitants, when, by a second note, Buonaparte required the arrest of the three Inquisitors of state, and immediate alterations in the constitution; he accompanied this with an order to the French minister to quit Genoa, if his commands were not immediately carried into execution; at the same moment his troops entered the territory of the republic, and shortly after the councils, intimidated and overpowered, abdicated their functions.

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Three deputies were then sent to Buonaparte to receive from him a new constitution: on the 6th of June, after the conferences at Montebello, he signed a convention, or rather issued a decree, by which he fixed the new form of their government; he himself named provisionally all the members who were to compose it, and he required the payment of seven millions of livres, as the price of the subversion of their constitution, and their independence. These transactions require but one short comment: it is to be found in the official account given of them at Paris, which is in these memorable words: "General Buonaparte has pursued the only line of conduct which could be allowed in the representative of a nation, which has supported the war only to procure the solemn acknowledgement of the right of nations, to change the form of their government. He contributed nothing towards the revolution of Genoa, but he seized the first moment to acknowledge the new government, as soon as he saw that it was the result of the wishes of the people."*

It is unnecessary to dwell on the wanton attacks against Rome under the direction of Buonaparte himself, in the year 1796, and in the beginning of 1797, which led first, to the treaty of Tolentino, concluded by Buonaparte, in which, by enormous sacrifices, the Pope was allowed to purchase the acknowledgement of his authority, as a sovereign prince; and secondly, to the violation of that very treaty, and to the subversion of the papal authority by Joseph Buonaparte, the brother and the agent of the general, and the minister of the French republic to the holy see: A transaction accompanied by outrages and insults towards the pious and venerable Pontiff (in spite of the sanctity of his age and the unsullied purity of his character), which even to a protestant, seemed hardly short of the guilt of sacrilege.

But of all the disgusting and tragical scenes which took place in Italy, in the course of the period I am describing, those which passed at Venice are perhaps the most striking, and the most characteristic: in May, 1796, the French army, under Buonaparte, in the full tide of its success against the Austrians, first

* Redacteur Official, June 30, 1797.

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approached the territories of this republic, which, from the commencement of the war, had observed a rigid neutrality. Their entrance on these territories was, as usual, accompanied by a solemn proclamation in the name of their general. "Buonaparte to the republic of Venice." "It is to deliver the finest country in Europe from the iron yoke of the proud house of Austria, that the French army has braved obstacles the most difficult to surmount. Victory in union with justice has crowned its efforts. The wreck of the enemy's army has retired behind the Mincio. The French army, in order to follow them, passes over the territory of the republic of Venice; but it will never forget, that antient friendship unites the two republics. Religion, government, customs, and property, shall be respected. That the people may be without apprehension, the most severe discipline shall be maintained. All that may be provided for the army shall be faithfully paid for in money. The general-in-chief engages the officers of the republic of Venice, the magistrates, and the priests, to make known these sentiments to the people, in order, that confidence may cement that friendship which has so long united the two nations, faithful in the path of honour, as in that of victory. The French soldier is terrible only to the enemies of his liberty and his government. Buonaparte."

This proclamation was followed by exactions similar to those which were practised against Genoa, by the renewal of similar professions of friendship, and the use of similar means to excite insurrections. At length, in the spring of 1797, occasion was taken from disturbances thus excited, to forge, in the name of the Venetian government, a proclamation,* hostile to France; and this proceeding was made the ground for military execution against the country, and for effecting by force the subversion of its antient government and the establishment of the democratic forms of the French revolution. This revolution was sealed by a treaty, signed in May, 1797, between Buonaparte and commissioners appointed on the part of the new and revolutionary government of Venice.

* Vide Account of this transaction, in the Proclamation of the Senate of Venice, April 12, 1798.

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By the second and third secret articles of this treaty, Venice agreed to give as a ransom, to secure itself against all farther exactions or demands, the sum of three millions of livres in money, the value of three millions more in articles of naval supply, and three ships of the line; and it received in return the assurances of the friendship and support of the French republic. Immediately after the signature of this treaty, the arsenal, the library, and the palace of St. Marc, were ransacked and plundered, and heavy additional contributions were imposed upon its inhabitants: and, in not more than four months afterwards, this very republic of Venice, united by alliance to France, the creature of Buonaparte himself, from whom it had received the present of French liberty, was by the same Buonaparte transferred, under the treaty of Campo Formio, to "that iron yoke of the proud house of Austria," to deliver it from which he had represented in his first proclamation to be the great object of all his operations.

Sir, all this is followed by the memorable expedition into Egypt, which I mention, not merely because it forms a principal article in the catalogue of those acts of violence and perfidy in which Buonaparte has been engaged; not merely because it was an enterprise peculiarly his own, of which he was himself the planner, the executor, and the betrayer; but chiefly because, when from thence he retires to a different scene to take possession of a new throne, from which he is to speak upon an equality with the kings and governors of Europe, he leaves behind him, at the moment of his departure, a specimen, which cannot be mistaken, of his principles of negociation. The intercepted correspondence, which has been alluded to in this debate, seems to afford the strongest ground to believe, that his offers to the Turkish government to evacuate Egypt were made solely with a view "*to gain time**;" that the ratification of any treaty on this subject was to be delayed with the view of finally eluding its performance, if any change of circumstances favourable to the French should occur in the interval. But whatever gentlemen may think of the intention with which these offers were made, there will at least be no question with

* Vide "Intercepted Letters from Egypt."

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respect to the credit due to those professions by which he endeavoured to prove, in Egypt, his pacific dispositions. He expressly enjoins his successor, strongly and steadily to insist in all his intercourse with the Turks, that he came to Egypt with no hostile design, and that he never meant to keep possession of the country; while, on the opposite page of the same instructions, he states in the most unequivocal manner his regret at the discomfiture of his favourite project of colonizing Egypt, and of maintaining it as a territorial acquisition. Now, Sir, if in any note addressed to the Grand Vizier, or the Sultan, Buonaparte had claimed credit for the sincerity of his professions, that he forcibly invaded Egypt with no view hostile to Turkey, and solely for the purpose of molesting the British interests; is there any one argument now used to induce us to believe his present professions to us, which might not have been equally urged on that occasion to the Turkish government? Would not those professions have been equally supported by solemn asseverations, by the same reference which is now made to personal character, with this single difference, that they would then have been accompanied with one instance less of that perfidy, which we have had occasion to trace in this very transaction?

It is unnecessary to say more with respect to the credit due to his professions, or the reliance to be placed on his general character: but it will, perhaps, be argued, that, whatever may be his character, or whatever has been his past conduct, he has now an interest in making and preserving peace. That he has an interest in making peace is at best but a doubtful proposition, and that he has an interest in preserving it is still more uncertain. That it is his interest to negociate, I do not indeed deny: it is his interest above all to engage this country in separate negociation, in order to loosen and dissolve the whole system of confederacy on the Continent, to palsy, at once, the arms of Russia or of Austria, or of any other country that might look to you for support; and then either to break off his separate treaty, or if he should have concluded it, to apply the lesson which is taught in his school of policy in Egypt; and to revive, at his pleasure, those

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claims of indemnification which *may have been reserved to some happier period* *.

This is precisely the interest which he has in negociation; but on what grounds are we to be convinced that he has an interest in concluding and observing a solid and permanent pacification? Under all the circumstances of his personal character, and his newly acquired power, what other security has he for retaining that power, but the sword? His hold upon France is the sword, and he has no other. Is he connected with the soil, or with the habits, the affections, or the prejudices of the country? He is a stranger, a foreigner, and an usurper; he unites in his own person every thing that a pure Republican must detest; every thing that an enraged Jacobin has abjured; every thing that a sincere and faithful Royalist must feel as an insult. If he is opposed at any time in his career, what is his appeal? *He appeals to his fortune;* in other words, to his army and his sword. Placing, then, his whole reliance upon military support, can he afford to let his military renown pass away, to let his laurels wither, to let the memory of his achievements sink in obscurity? Is it certain that with his army confined within France, and restrained from inroads upon her neighbours, he can maintain, at his devotion, a force sufficiently numerous to support his power? Having no object but the possession of absolute dominion, no passion but military glory, is it certain, that he can feel such an interest in permanent peace, as would justify us in laying down our arms, reducing our expense, and relinquishing our means of security, on the faith of his engagements? Do we believe, that after the conclusion of peace, he would not still sigh over the lost trophies of Egypt, wrested from him by the celebrated victory of Aboukir, and the brilliant exertions of that heroic band of British seamen, whose influence and example rendered the Turkish troops invincible at Acre? Can he forget, that the effect of these exploits enabled Austria and Russia, in one campaign, to recover from France all which she had acquired by his victories, to dissolve the charm, which, for a time, fascinated Europe, and to shew that their generals, contending in

* Vide "Intercepted Letters from Egypt."

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a just cause, could efface, even by their success and their military glory, the most dazzling triumphs of his victories and desolating ambition?

Can we believe, with these impressions on his mind, that if, after a year, eighteen months, or two years, of peace had elapsed, he should be tempted by the appearance of a fresh insurrection in Ireland, encouraged by renewed and unrestrained communication with France, and fomented by the fresh infusion of jacobin principles; if we were at such a moment without a fleet to watch the ports of France, or to guard the coasts of Ireland, without a disposable army, or an embodied militia, capable of supplying a speedy and adequate reinforcement, and that he had suddenly the means of transporting thither a body of twenty or thirty thousand French troops; can we believe, that at such a moment his ambition and vindictive spirit would be restrained by the recollection of engagements, or the obligation of treaty? Or, if in some new crisis of difficulty and danger to the Ottoman empire, with no British navy in the Mediterranean, no confederacy formed, no force collected to support it, an opportunity should present itself for resuming the abandoned expedition to Egypt, for renewing the avowed and favourite project of conquering and colonizing that rich and fertile country, and of opening the way to wound some of the vital interests of England, and to plunder the treasures of the East, in order to fill the bankrupt coffers of France, would it be the interest of Buonaparte, under such circumstances, or his principles, his moderation, his love of peace, his aversion to conquest, and his regard for the independence of other nations—would it be all, or any of these that would secure us against an attempt, which would leave us only the option of submitting, without a struggle, to certain loss and disgrace, or of renewing the contest which we had prematurely terminated, and renewing it without allies, without preparation, with diminished means, and with increased difficulty and hazard?

Hitherto I have spoken only of the reliance which we can place on the professions, the character, and the conduct of the present First Consul; but it remains to consider the stability of his power.

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The revolution has been marked throughout by a rapid succession of new depositaries of public authority, each supplanting his predecessor: what grounds have we as yet to believe that this new usurpation, more odious and more undisguised than all that preceded it, will be more durable? Is it that we rely on the particular provisions contained in the code of the pretended constitution, which was proclaimed as accepted by the French people, as soon as the garrison of Paris declared their determination to exterminate all its enemies, and before any of its articles could even be known to half the country, whose consent was required for its establishment?

I will not pretend to enquire deeply into the nature and effects of a constitution, which can hardly be regarded but as a farce and a mockery. If, however, it could be supposed that its provisions were to have any effect, it seems equally adapted to two purposes; that of giving to its founder for a time an absolute and uncontrolled authority, and that of laying the certain foundation of future disunion and discord, which, if they once prevail, must render the exercise of all the authority under the constitution impossible, and leave no appeal but to the sword.

Is the n military despotism that which we are accustomed to consider as a stable form of government? In all ages of the world, it has been attended with the least stability to the persons who exercised it, and with the most rapid succession of changes and revolutions. The advocates of the French revolution boasted in its outset, that by their new system they had furnished a security for ever, not to France only, but to all countries in the world, against military despotism; that the force of standing armies was vain and delusive; that no artificial power could resist public opinion; and that it was upon the foundation of public opinion alone that any government could stand. I believe, that in this instance, as in every other, the progress of the French revolution has belied its professions; but so far from its being a proof of the prevalence of public opinion against military force, it is, instead of the proof, the strongest exception from that doctrine, which appears in the history of the world. Through all the stages of the revolution mili-

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tary force has governed; public opinion has scarcely been heard. But still I consider this as only an exception from a general truth; I still believe, that, in every civilized country (not enslaved by a jacobin faction), public opinion is the only sure support of any government: I believe this with the more satisfaction, from a conviction, that if this contest is happily terminated, the established governments of Europe will stand upon that rock firmer than ever; and whatever may be the defects of any particular constitution, those who live under it will prefer its continuance to the experiment of changes which may plunge them in the unfathomable abyss of revolution, or extricate them from it, only to expose them to the terrors of military despotism. And to apply this to France, I see no reason to believe, that the present usurpation will be more permanent than any other military despotism, which has been established by the same means, and with the same defiance of public opinion.

What, then, is the inference I draw from all that I have now stated? Is it, that we will in no case treat with Buonaparte? I say no such thing. But I say, as has been said in the answer returned to the French note, that we ought to wait for *experience, and the evidence of facts*, before we are convinced that such a treaty is admissible. The circumstances I have stated, would well justify us if we should be slow in being convinced; but on a question of peace and war, every thing depends upon degree, and upon comparison. If, on the one hand, there should be an appearance that the policy of France is at length guided by different maxims from those which have hitherto prevailed; if we should hereafter see signs of stability in the government, which are not now to be traced; if the progress of the allied army should not call forth such a spirit in France, as to make it probable that the act of the country itself will destroy the system now prevailing; if the danger, the difficulty, the risk of continuing the contest, should increase, while the hope of complete ultimate success should be diminished; all these, in their due place, are considerations, which, with myself and (I can answer for it) with every one of my colleagues, will have their just weight. But at present these considerations all

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operate one way; at present there is nothing from which we can presage a favourable disposition to change in the French councils: There is the greatest reason to rely on powerful co-operation from our allies; there are the strongest marks of a diposition in the interior of France to active resistance against this new tyranny; and there is every ground to believe, on reviewing our situation, and that of the enemy, that if we are ultimately disappointed of that complete success which we are at present entitled to hope, the continuance of the contest, instead of making our situation comparatively worse, will have made it comparatively better.

If, then, I am asked, how long are we to persevere in the war? I can only say, that no period can be accurately assigned beforehand. Considering the importance of obtaining complete security for the objects for which we contend, we ought not to be discouraged too soon: but on the other hand, considering the importance of not impairing and exhausting the radical strength of the country, there are limits beyond which we ought not to persist, and which we can determine only by estimating and comparing fairly, from time to time, the degree of security to be obtained by treaty, and the risk and disadvantage of continuing the contest.

But, Sir, there are some gentlemen in the house, who seem to consider it already certain, that the ultimate success to which I am looking is unattainable: they suppose us contending only for the restoration of the French monarchy, which they believe to be impracticable, and deny to be desirable for this country. We have been asked in the course of this debate, do you think you can impose monarchy upon France, against the will of the nation? I never thought it, I never hoped it, I never wished it; I have thought, I have hoped, I have wished, that the time might come when the effect of the arms of the allies might so far overpower the military force which keeps France in bondage, as to give vent and scope to the thoughts and actions of its inhabitants. We have, indeed, already seen abundant proof of what is the disposition of a large part of the country; we have seen almost through the whole of the revolution, the western provinces of France

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deluged with the blood of its inhabitants, obstinately contending for their antient laws and religion. We have recently seen, in the revival of that war, a fresh instance of the zeal which still animates those countries, in the same cause. These efforts (I state it distinctly, and there are those near me who can bear witness to the truth of the assertion) were not produced by any instigation from hence; they were the effects of a rooted sentiment prevailing through all those provinces, forced into action by the *Law of the Hostages* and the other tyrannical measures of the Directory, at the moment when we were endeavouring to discourage so hazardous an enterprise. If, under such circumstances, we find them giving proofs of their unalterable perseverance in their principles; if there is every reason to believe that the same disposition prevails in many other extensive provinces of France; if every party appears at length equally wearied and disappointed with all the successive changes which the revolution has produced; if the question is no longer between monarchy, and even the pretence and name of liberty, but between the antient line of hereditary princes on the one hand, and a military tyrant, a foreign usurper, on the other; if the armies of that usurper are likely to find sufficient occupation on the frontiers, and to be forced at length to leave the interior of the country at liberty to manifest its real feeling and disposition; what reason have we to anticipate, that the restoration of monarchy, under such circumstances, is impracticable?

The learned gentleman has, indeed, told us, that almost every man now possessed of property in France must necessarily be interested in resisting such a change, and that therefore it never can be effected. If that single consideration were conclusive against the possibility of a change, for the same reason the revolution itself, by which the whole property of the country was taken from its antient possessors, could never have taken place. But though I deny it to be an insuperable obstacle, I admit it to be a point of considerable delicacy and difficulty. It is not, indeed, for us to discuss minutely what arrangement might be formed on this point to conciliate and unite opposite interests; but whoever considers the precarious tenure and depreciated value of lands held under

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the revolutionary title, and the low price for which they have generally been obtained, will think it, perhaps, not impossible that an ample compensation might be made to the bulk of the present possessors, both for the purchase-money they have paid, and for the actual value of what they now enjoy; and that the antient proprietors might be reinstated in the possession of their former rights, with only such a temporary sacrifice as reasonable men would willingly make to obtain so essential an object.

The honourable and learned gentleman, however, has supported his reasoning on this part of the subject, by an argument which he undoubtedly considers as unanswerable—a reference to what would be his own conduct in similar circumstances; and he tells us, that every landed proprietor in France must support the present order of things in that country from the same motive that he and every proprietor of three per cent. stock would join in the defence of the constitution of Great Britain. I must do the learned gentleman the justice to believe, that the habits of his profession must supply him with better and nobler motives, for defending a constitution which he has had so much occasion to study and examine, than any which he can derive from the value of his proportion (however large) of three per cents, even supposing them to continue to increase in price as rapidly as they have done, during the last three years, in which the security and prosperity of the country has been established by following a system directly opposite to the counsels of the learned gentleman and his friends.

The learned gentleman's illustration, however, though it fails with respect to himself, is happily and aptly applied to the state of France; and let us see what inference it furnishes with respect to the probable attachment of monied men to the continuance of the revolutionary system, as well as with respect to the general state of public credit in that country. I do not, indeed, know that there exists precisely any fund of three per cents. in France, to furnish a test for the patriotism and public spirit of the lovers of French liberty. But there is another fund which may equally answer our purpose—the capital of three per cent. stock which formerly existed in France has undergone a whimsical operation,

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similar to many other expedients of finance which we have seen in the course of the revolution—this was performed by a decree, which, as they termed it, *republicanized* their debt; that is, in other words, struck off, at once, two-thirds of the capital, and left the proprietors to take their chance for the payment of interest on the remainder. This remnant was afterwards converted into the present five per cent. stock. I had the curiosity very lately to inquire what price it bore in the market, and I was told that the price had somewhat risen from confidence in the new government, and was actually as high as *seventeen*. I really at first supposed that my informer meant seventeen years purchase for every pound of interest, and I began to be almost jealous of revolutionary credit; but I soon found that he literally meant seventeen pounds for every hundred pounds capital stock of five per cent. that is, a little more than three and a half years purchase. So much for the value of revolutionary property, and for the attachment with which it must inspire its possessors towards the system of government to which that value is to be ascribed!

On the question, Sir, how far the restoration of the French monarchy, if practicable, is desirable, I shall not think it necessary to say much. Can it be supposed to be indifferent to us or to the world, whether the throne of France is to be filled by a prince of the house of Bourbon, or by him whose principles and conduct I have endeavoured to develope? Is it nothing, with a view to influence and example, whether the fortune of this last adventurer in the lottery of Revolutions shall appear to be permanent? Is it nothing, whether a system shall be sanctioned, which confirms by one of its fundamental articles, that general transfer of property from its ancient and lawful possessors, which holds out one of the most terrible examples of national injustice, and which has furnished the great source of revolutionary finance and revolutionary strength against all the powers of Europe?

In the exhausted and impoverished state of France, it seems for a time impossible that any system but that of robbery and confiscation, any thing but the continued torture, which can be applied only by the engines of the revolution, can extort from its

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ruined inhabitants more than the means of supporting, in peace, the yearly expenditure of its government. Suppose, then, the heir of the house of Bourbon reinstated on the throne, he will have sufficient occupation in endeavouring, if possible, to heal the wounds, and gradually to repair the losses of ten years of civil convulsion; to reanimate the drooping commerce, to rekindle the industry, to replace the capital, and to revive the manufactures of the country. Under such circumstances, there must probably be a considerable interval before such a monarch, whatever may be his views, can possess the power which can make him formidable to Europe; but while the system of the revolution continues, the case is quite different. It is true, indeed, that even the gigantic and unnatural means by which that revolution has been supported, are so far impaired; the influence of its principles, and the terror of its arms, so far weakened; and its power of action so much contracted and circumscribed, that against the embodied force of Europe, prosecuting a vigorous war, we may justly hope that the remnant and wreck of this system cannot long oppose an effectual resistance. But, supposing the confederacy of Europe prematurely dissolved; supposing our armies disbanded, our fleets laid up in our harbours, our exertions relaxed, and our means of precaution and defence relinquished; do we believe that the revolutionary power, with this rest and breathing-time given it to recover from the pressure under which it is now sinking, possessing still the means of calling suddenly and violently into action whatever is the remaining physical force of France, under the guidance of military despotism; do we believe that this power, the terror of which is now beginning to vanish, will not again prove formidable to Europe? Can we forget, that in the ten years in which that power has subsisted, it has brought more misery on surrounding nations, and produced more acts of aggression, cruelty, perfidy, and enormous ambition, than can be traced in the history of France for the centuries which have elapsed since the foundation of its monarchy, including all the wars which, in the course of that period, have been waged by any of those sovereigns, whose projects of aggrandizement, and violations of treaty, afford a constant

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theme of general reproach against the ancient government of France? And with these considerations before us, can we hesitate whether we have the best prospect of permanent peace, the best security for the independence and safety of Europe, from the restoration of the lawful government, or from the continuance of revolutionary power in the hands of Buonaparte?

In compromise and treaty with such a power, placed in such hands as now exercise it, and retaining the same means of annoyance which it now possesses, I see little hope of permanent security. I see no possibility at this moment, of concluding such a peace as would justify that liberal intercourse which is the essence of real amity; no chance of terminating the expenses or the anxieties of war, or of restoring to us any of the advantages of established tranquillity; and as a sincere lover of peace, I cannot be content with its nominal attainment; I must be desirous of pursuing that system which promises to attain, in the end, the permanent enjoyment of its solid and substantial blessings for this country, and for Europe. As a sincere lover of peace, I will not sacrifice it by grasping at the shadow, when the reality is not substantially within my reach——

Cur igitur pacem nolo? Quia infida est, quia periculosa, quia esse non potest.

If, Sir, in all that I have now offered to the house, I have succeeded in establishing the proposition, that the system of the French revolution has been such as to afford to foreign powers no adequate ground for security in negociation, and that the change which has recently taken place has not yet afforded that security; if I have laid before you a just statement of the nature and extent of the danger with which we have been threatened; it would remain only shortly to consider, whether there is any thing in the circumstances of the present moment to induce us to accept a security confessedly inadequate against a danger of such a description.

It will be necessary here to say a few words on the subject on which gentlemen have been so fond of dwelling; I mean our former negociations, and particularly that at Lisle in 1797. I am

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desirous of stating frankly and openly the true motives which induced me to concur in then recommending negociation; and I will leave it to the house, and to the country, to judge whether our conduct at that time was inconsistent with the principles by which we are guided at present. That revolutionary policy which I have endeavoured to describe, that gigantic system of prodigality and bloodshed by which the efforts of France were supported, and which counts for nothing the lives and the property of a nation, had at that period driven us to exertions which had, in a great measure, exhausted the ordinary means of defraying our immense expenditure, and had led many of those who were the most convinced of the original justice and necessity of the war, and of the danger of jacobin principles, to doubt the possibility of persisting in it, till complete and adequate security could be obtained. There seemed, too, much reason to believe, that without some new measure to check the rapid accumulation of debt, we could no longer trust to the stability of that funding system, by which the nation had been enabled to support the expense of all the different wars in which we have engaged in the course of the present century. In order to continue our exertions with vigour, it became necessary that a new and solid system of finance should be established, such as could not be rendered effectual but by the general and decided concurrence of public opinion. Such a concurrence in the strong and vigorous measures necessary for the purpose could not then be expected, but from satisfying the country, by the strongest and most decided proofs, that peace on terms in any degree admissible was unattainable.

Under this impression we thought it our duty to attempt negociation, not from the sanguine hope, even at that time, that its result could afford us complete security, but from the persuasion, that the danger arising from peace under such circumstances was less than that of continuing the war with precarious and inadequate means. The result of those negociations proved, that the enemy would be satisfied with nothing less than the sacrifice of the honour and independence of the country. From this conviction, a spirit and enthusiasm was excited in the nation, which produced

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the efforts to which we are indebted for the subsequent change in our situation. Having witnessed that happy change, having observed the increasing prosperity and security of the country from that period, seeing how much more satisfactory our prospects now are, than any which we could then have derived from the successful result of negociation, I have not scrupled to declare, that I consider the rupture of the negociation, on the part of the enemy, as a fortunate circumstance for the country. But because these are my sentiments at this time, after reviewing what has since passed, does it follow that we were, at that time, insincere in endeavouring to obtain peace? The learned gentleman, indeed, assumes that we were; and he even makes a concession, of which I desire not to claim the benefit; he is willing to admit, that on our principles, and our view of the subject, insincerity would have been justifiable. I know, Sir, no plea that would justify those who are entrusted with the conduct of public affairs, in holding out to parliament and to the nation one object while they were, in fact, pursuing another. I did, in fact, believe, at the moment, the conclusion of peace (if it could have been obtained) to be preferable to the continuance of the war under its increasing risks and difficulties. I therefore wished for peace; I sincerely laboured for peace. Our endeavours were frustrated by the act of the enemy. If, then, the circumstances are since changed, if what passed at that period has afforded a proof that the object we aimed at was unattainable, and if all that has passed since has proved, that, if peace had been then made, it could not have been durable, are we bound to repeat the same experiment, when every reason against it is strengthened by subsequent experience, and when the inducements, which led to it at that time, have ceased to exist?

When we consider the resources and the spirit of the country, can any man doubt that if adequate security is not now to be obtained by treaty, we have the means of prosecuting the contest without material difficulty or danger; and with a reasonable prospect of completely attaining our object? I will not dwell on the improved state of public credit, on the continually increasing

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amount (in spite of extraordinary temporary burthens) of our permanent revenue, on the yearly accession of wealth to a degree unprecedented even in the most flourishing times of peace, which we are deriving, in the midst of war, from our extended and flourishing commerce; on the progressive improvement and growth of our manufactures; on the proofs which we see on all sides, of the uninterrupted accumulation of productive capital; and on the active exertion of every branch of national industry, which can tend to support and augment the population, the riches, and the power of the country.

As little need I recall the attention of the house to the additional means of action which we have derived from the great augmentation of our disposable military force, the continued triumphs of our powerful and victorious navy, and the events, which, in the course of the last two years, have raised the military ardour and military glory of the country to a height unexampled in any period of our history.

In addition to these grounds of reliance on our own strength and exertions, we have seen the consummate skill and valour of the arms of our allies proved by that series of unexampled success which distinguished the last campaign, and we have every reason to expect a co-operation on the continent, even to a greater extent, in the course of the present year. If we compare this view of our own situation with every thing we can observe of the state and condition of our enemy; if we can trace him labouring under equal difficulty in finding men to recruit his army, or money to pay it; if we know that in the course of the last year the most rigorous efforts of military conscription were scarcely sufficient to replace to the French armies, at the end of the campaign, the numbers which they had lost in the course of it; if we have seen that the force of the enemy, then in possession of advantages which it has since lost, was unable to contend with the efforts of the combined armies; if we know that, even while supported by the plunder of all the countries which they had overrun, the French armies were reduced, by the confession of their commanders, to the extremity of distress, and destitute not only of the principal

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articles of military supply, but almost of the necessaries of life; if we see them now driven back within their own frontiers, and confined within a country whose own resources have long since been proclaimed by their successive governments to be unequal either to paying or maintaining them; if we observe, that since the last revolution, no one substantial or effectual measure has been adopted to remedy the intolerable disorder of their finances, and to supply the deficiency of their credit and resources; if we see through large and populous districts of France, either open war levied against the present usurpation, or evident marks of disunion and distraction, which the first occasion may call forth into a flame; if, I say, Sir, this comparison be just, I feel myself authorized to conclude from it, not that we are entitled to consider ourselves certain of ultimate success, not that we are to suppose ourselves exempted from the unforeseen vicissitudes of war; but that, considering the value of the object for which we are contending, the means for supporting the contest, and the probable course of human events, we should be inexcusable, if at this moment we were to relinquish the struggle on any grounds short of entire and complete security against the greatest danger which has ever yet threatened the world; that from perseverance in our efforts under such circumstances, we have the fairest reason to expect the full attainment of that object; but that, at all events, even if we are disappointed in our more sanguine hopes, we are more likely to gain than to lose by the continuation of the contest; that every month to which it is continued, even if it should not, in its effects, lead to the final destruction of the jacobin system, must tend so far to weaken and exhaust it, as to give us at least a greater comparative security in any other termination of the war; that on all these grounds, this is not the moment at which it is consistent with our interest or our duty to listen to any proposals of negociation with the present Ruler of France; but that we are not therefore pledged to any unalterable determination as to our future conduct; that in this we must be regulated by the course of events; and that it will be the duty of his Majesty's ministers from time to time to adapt their measures to any variation of circumstances, to

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consider how far the effects of the military operations of the allies, or of the internal disposition of France, correspond with our present expectations; and, on a view of the whole, to compare the difficulties or risks which may arise in the prosecution of the contest, with the prospect of ultimate success, or of the degree of advantage which may be derived from its farther continuance, and to be governed by the result of all these considerations, in the opinion and advice which they may offer to their sovereign.

The address was carried,

Ayes . . . 265
Noes . . . 64

February 17, 1800.

Mr. Pitt having moved the order of the day, for referring his Majesty's message * to a committee of the whole house, to consider of a supply to be granted to his Majesty; and the house having resolved itself into a committee accordingly, he then rose and said:—

The motion which I shall submit to the committee this day, is founded upon a principle which has been often, and has recently been recognised in this house, that we are to proceed in a vigorous prosecution of the war; a measure which we in common feel to be necessary for the safety, honour, and happiness

* "GEORGE R.

"His Majesty is at present employed in concerting such engagements with the Emperor of Germany, the Elector of Bavaria, and other powers of the empire, as may strengthen the efforts of his Imperial Majesty, and materially conduce to the advantage of the common cause in the course of the ensuing campaign; and his Majesty will give directions, that these engagements, as soon as they shall have been completed and ratified, shall be laid before the house. But, in order to ensure the benefit of this co-operation at an early period, his Majesty is desirous of authorising his minister to make (provisionally) such advances as may be necessary, in the first instance, for this purpose; and his Majesty recommends it to the house to enable him to make such provision accordingly. G. R."

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of this country. Those who were of opinion that his Majesty's government acted wisely in declining negociation at this period with the enemy, will not be backward in consenting to continue, or, if necessary, to augment the force that may be deemed proper to be used in the common cause, such as was employed last year, or may be employed this, and which affords the best prospect of success on the frontier of France. This gives, even to France, an opportunity of relieving itself from a galling yoke and obtaining a happy repose, and to its neighbours a hope of permanent tranquillity. It affords a prospect of delivering the remainder of the continent (for much of it was delivered during the last campaign) from the horror of a system which once threatened even more than all Europe with total destruction. These are among the great objects which we must endeavour to accomplish. Above all, we have to crush and disable the system of jacobinism, or if we even fail in completely destroying that monster, we should at least persevere till we have weakened the instruments and engines by which it propagates its principles; for it is generally agreed, that there can be no safety for Europe as long as jacobinism remains strong and triumphant. Those, therefore, I say, who were of opinion that his Majesty's ministers acted wisely in declining to negociate with the enemy at this moment, will not be unwilling to assent to the motion with which I shall have the honour of concluding. But I should hope that even those who recommended negociation, and who, I believe, recommended it without much confidence of ultimate success, if it were attempted, will acquiesce in the measure that I am now going to propose. The majority of this house, and the great majority of the people of this country, will, I am confident, agree, that if the war is to be carried on at all, it should be carried on upon that scale which is most likely to bring it to an honourable, if possible a speedy, but at all events, to a secure conclusion.

After what I have seen of the brilliant achievements last year, it is not for me to say how much is to be expected from the exertions of the Imperial arms; this is not for me to argue—it rests

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upon a much better foundation than any argument can be. I am aware, that there is fresh in the minds of those who are most anxious for the honour of the common cause, a supposition that there may not be the same co-operation of both the Imperial courts, or that the same force will not be employed against France in the present year, or the ensuing campaign, as there was the last campaign. I take this opportunity of stating, that there is reason to believe the Emperor of Russia will not employ his arms to the same extent, if to any extent, against France, in conjunction with Austria. I stated this on a former night. I stated also, that there was no reason to believe that his Imperial Majesty, the Emperor of Russia, will withdraw from the most cordial co-operation with this country, or cease to shew his resolution not to acquiesce with France, whilst it pursues a system, such as it does now, that endangers the tranquillity of Europe and all its establishments. But if there were any grounds of apprehension that his Imperial Majesty would withdraw all co-operation, I should then take the liberty of urging that as an additional reason for the measure which his Majesty has taken, and which was communicated to us by his gracious message, part of which the committee has just heard read; and the committee will learn with satisfaction, that the force from the power of Germany will be greater in the ensuing campaign than it was in the last, great and brilliant as its victories were: I should therefore expect the concurrence of this committee to any measure which may be likely to further so very desirable an object. If the general object, therefore, be likely to meet the concurrence of the house, as by recent discussion the house has already declared and pledged itself it should, I might now proceed to my motion; but there are some other points upon which it is perhaps expected that I should touch briefly. At this period of the year, and from circumstances which I need not enumerate, we cannot have the treaties ready to be laid before parliament, therefore the house cannot judge ultimately on the scheme, part only of which is now laid before it; but I say there is already enough before us to make it incumbent on parliament, at this crisis, to enable his Majesty to make

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advances such as may prevent the enemy from having any advantage by postponing the efforts of the allies beyond an early period, or of preventing the campaign from being opened with that vigour which the friends of the common cause against the common enemy could wish: the great object of the present measure is to give spirit to the campaign at its commencement, and afterwards due strength for its continuance on the part of the allies.

These are the two principles on which his Majesty's message is founded; and the motion with which I shall have the honour of concluding, is to give his Majesty's intention effect. I am not aware of any objections that are likely to be made to this measure. If I should hear any, I shall endeavour to give them an answer. There is only one point more to which I beg leave to allude, and which was hinted at on a former day: I have stated, that from the circumstances of the continent, the negociations between us and our allies are not fully concluded; it is therefore impossible for me to name the whole force to be employed, or the total amount of the pecuniary assistance which this country is to afford to his Imperial Majesty. I have already said, it is proposed in the mean time that 500,000*l.* should be advanced by way of commencement. At the same time, I am aware that gentlemen would naturally expect I should state some general heads of what we have in view by the measure now about to be submitted to the committee. The object of it is to secure the co-operation of such a force as his Majesty's ministers have reason to believe is likely to be superior to any force the French can bring to the frontier. The total amount of the advance upon this subject will probably be two millions and a half; for the whole force to be employed against France is considerably larger than it was last year. The sum which is now proposed to be voted is only 500,000*l.* I shall therefore move, "That it is the opinion of this committee, that a sum not exceeding 500,000*l.* be granted to his Majesty, to enable his Majesty to make such advances as may be necessary for the purpose of insuring, at an early period, a vigorous co-operation of the Emperor of Germany, the Elector of Bavaria and other powers, in the ensuing campaign against the common enemy."

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Mr. Tierney in strong terms objected to the motion, challenging ministers to define, if it were possible, the real aim and object of the war. It is not, concluded he, the destruction of jacobin principles; it may be the restoration of the House of Bourbon; but I would wish the right honourable gentleman in one sentence to state, if he can, without his *ifs* and *buts*, and special pleading ambiguity, what this object is. I am persuaded he cannot; and that he calls us to prosecute a war, and to lavish our treasure and blood in its support, when no one plain satisfactory reason can be given for its continuance.

Mr. PITT.—The observation with which the honourable gentleman concluded his speech, appears to me one of the strangest I ever heard advanced, and first challenges my attention. He defies me to state, in one sentence, what is the object of the war. I know not whether I can do it in one sentence; but in one word, I can tell him that it is SECURITY; security against a danger, the greatest that ever threatened the world. It is security against a danger which never existed in any past period of society. It is security against a danger which in degree and extent was never equalled; against a danger which threatened all the nations of the earth; against a danger which has been resisted by all the nations of Europe, and resisted by none with so much success as by this nation, because by none has it been resisted so uniformly, and with so much energy. This country alone, of all the nations of Europe, presented barriers the best fitted to resist its progress. We alone recognised the necessity of open war, as well with the principles, as the practice of the French revolution. We saw that it was to be resisted no less by arms abroad, than by precaution at home; that we were to look for protection no less to the courage of our forces, than to the wisdom of our councils; no less to military effort, than to legislative enactment. At the moment when those, who now admit the dangers of jacobinism while they contend that it is extinct, used to palliate its atrocity, and extenuate its mischief, this house wisely saw that it was necessary to erect a double safeguard against a danger that wrought no less by undisguised hostility than by secret machination. But how long is it since the honourable gentleman and his friends have

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discovered that the dangers of jacobinism have ceased to exist? How long is it since they have found that the cause of the French revolution is not the cause of liberty? How or where did the honourable gentleman discover that the jacobinism of Robespierre, of Barrere, the jacobinism of the Triumvirate, the jacobinism of the Five Directors, which he acknowledged to be real, has all vanished and disappeared, because it has all been centered and condensed into one man who was reared and nursed in its bosom, whose celebrity was gained under its auspices, who was at once the child and the champion of all its atrocities and horrors? Our security in negociation is to be this Buonaparte, who is now the sole organ of all that was formerly dangerous and pestiferous in the revolution. Jacobinism is allowed formerly to have existed, because the power was divided. Now it is single, and it no longer lives. This discovery is new, and I know not how it has been made.

But the honourable gentleman asks, What is our intention? He asks, Whether the war is to be carried on till jacobinism is finally extinguished? If he means that war is to be carried on till jacobinism has either lost its sting or is abridged in its power to do evil, I say that this is the object of our exertions. I do not say that we must wage war until the principle of jacobinism is extinguished in the mind of every individual; were that the object of the contest, I am afraid it would not terminate but with the present generation. I am afraid that a mind once tainted with that infection, never recovers its healthful state. I am afraid that no purification is sufficient to eradicate the poison of that foul distemper. Even those, we see, who so loudly tell us now that the danger of jacobinism is past, are endeavouring to disarm us of the means of carrying on the war we now wage against its remnant, by those arts which they employed to bend us down before its meridian splendour. They tell us again, that, by resisting that pestilent mischief, we are promoting distress, that we are despising humanity. They tell us that we have spent two hundred millions for a phrase—for the words "just and necessary." I hope, Sir, that the people of this country will

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not be governed by words. No, Sir, the people of England will not be so misled. We have spent two hundred millions: but what has been the object—what have been the fruits of this expenditure? If this country has spent two hundred millions, they have been spent to preserve the sources of its prosperity, its happiness, its glory, its freedom. Yes, Sir, we have spent that sum; and I trust we are ready, as I am sure we are able, to spend two hundred millions more for purposes so great and important. I trust this country is ready to exert its efforts to avail ourselves of the assistance of our allies to obtain real security, and to attain solid peace.

It is true that in this contest different opinions may exist as to the means by which the danger is to be resisted; the Emperor of Russia may approve of one course; the Emperor of Germany may adopt another. But is it not strange that the honourable gentleman should be so particularly displeased that we should be desirous of the co-operation of the Emperor of Germany, who has not gone so far in his declarations on the subject of the war as the Emperor of Russia? Is it a ground of objection with the honourable gentleman, that we should avail ourselves of the assistance of those who do not declare themselves in favour of that object which he professes himself particularly to disapprove? If, as I do not believe, the Emperor of Germany did not see any danger in French principles; if, as I do not believe, the Emperor of Germany considers it as no desirable object to overthrow that government by which they are embodied and organized, yet are we to refuse the co-operation of that power which may so essentially contribute to promote that security which we have in view? Without changing our own objects, may we not avail ourselves of the aid of other powers, though the motives of the co-operation may not be those which dictate our own exertions? Admitting that the Emperor of Germany has no other view but to regain possession of the Netherlands, to drive the enemy back to the Rhine, to recover the fortresses which it was for a moment forced to abandon, are these objects which we have no interest to promote? are these designs which have no relation to British policy — no connexion with

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British safety? Whatever be the professions of Austria, she must dread the hostility of French principles, she must distrust the security of republican peace. Why, then, should we be unwilling to employ the co-operation of Austrian arms for objects in which we ourselves are so nearly concerned? It is our duty, it is our highest interest to encourage the exertions, and to promote the views of Austria, with which our own security is so materially concerned.

The honourable gentleman took another ground of argument, to which I shall now follow him. He said, that the war could not be just, because it was carried on for the restoration of the House of Bourbon; and, secondly, that it could not be necessary, because we had refused to negociate for peace when an opportunity for negociation was offered us. As to the first proposition, that it cannot be just, because it is carried on for the restoration of the House of Bourbon, he has assumed the foundation of the argument, and has left no ground for controverting it, or for explanation, because he says that any attempt at explanation upon this subject is the mere ambiguous unintelligible language of *ifs* and *buts*, and of special pleading. Now, Sir, I never had much liking to special pleading; and if ever I had any, it is by this time almost entirely gone. He has besides so abridged me of the use of particles, that though I am not particularly attached to the sound of an *if* or a *but*, I would be much obliged to the honourable gentleman if he would give me some others to supply their places. Is this, however, a light matter, that it should be treated in so light a manner? The restoration of the French monarchy, I will still tell the honourable gentleman, I consider as a most desirable object, because I think that it would afford the strongest and best security to this country and to Europe. *But* this object may not be attainable; and *if* it be not attainable, we must be satisfied with the best security which we can find independent of it. Peace is most desirable to this country; *but* negociation may be attended with greater evils than could be counterbalanced by any benefits which would result from it. And *if* this be found to be the case; *if* it afford no prospect of security; *if* it threaten all the evils which we have been struggling to avert; *if* the prosecution of the war

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afford the prospect of attaining complete security; and *if* it may be prosecuted with increasing commerce, with increasing means, and with increasing prosperity, except what may result from the visitations of the seasons; then I say, that it is prudent in us not to negociate at the present moment. These are my *buts* and my *ifs*. This is my plea, and on no other do I wish to be tried, by God and my country.

The honourable gentleman says, that we reduce our own means in the same proportion that we exhaust those of the enemy. Is this, indeed, the conclusion which we must draw from a survey of the respective situations of France and England, since the negociation at Paris, and particularly those at Lisle? Does the honourable gentleman really think, that the means of this country have been exhausted in the same proportion with those of the enemy? Does he think that the expense of a new campaign will produce that effect? On these grounds of comparison the question is to be decided, and not upon those topics which are adduced to create a prejudice against the war, and those insidious representations employed to render it unpopular. It is, indeed, to become the allies of jacobinism; to connect, as some affect to do, the present scarcity with the subject of the war. It is, indeed, to resort to its most destructive weapons, thus to appeal to the feelings of the multitude and call upon them to decide on such a ground upon a question, of which, in their coolest state, they are, perhaps, unqualified to judge. When we see such arts employed, I think it pretty strong proof that jacobinism is not extinct. If indeed we find that it is still alive even in the minds of spectators, what influence must it not possess with those who are involved in its scenes, and who rule by its influence?

It is said, however, that I endeavour to prevent the freedom of deliberation, by saying, that parliament, by its former vote, is pledged to this particular measure. Most certainly I have no such intention; on the contrary, I stated only, that those who think the war should be continued, must approve of every means by which it can be carried on with vigour and success. The question then is, whether the measure is calculated for that end? if it is, it would

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be to suppose parliament guided by no consistent view, if it did not meet with its approbation: That the honourable gentleman and his friends should oppose the measure, I should be disposed to ascribe, not so much to their disapproving it, as to their opposition to the war itself. I took it for granted, indeed, that even some of those who opposed the war itself, might acquiesce in this measure, because I trust their sentiment is sincere; they cannot prevent the war—they must be desirous to see it carried on with vigour and success. If they had no other object but to palsy our efforts, to disarm our force in the prosecution of a contest, which their votes cannot prevent; their objects would be criminal, their language would be mischievous. I hope, however, that the feelings, which, in candour, I supposed gentlemen on the other side to possess, will not be belied by their conduct.

The honourable gentleman says, that though his friends are few, they have represented the opinions of the country on a former occasion, and that they now represent it in their expressed desire of peace. If he meant this in the full sense of his expressions, it is another proof that jacobinism is not yet overthrown; for it is one of its most favourite principles, that the few who compose the sect, represent the opinion of the many. I recollect an expression of an honourable gentleman*, who now seldom favours us with his presence, when speaking of himself and his friends, "the few who express the voice of the people," which is nearly the same with the language of the honourable gentleman this night. But I must require a little more evidence than either of them ever produced, to prove that they speak, or ever have spoken, the voice of the country. On the occasion alluded to, when government thought it expedient to make an attempt at negociation, I deny that the voice of the majority of the country was for peace: but many entertained a hope that there was some chance of security in negociation, and wished the attempt to be made. Government coincided with them in opinion; but very few now regret, from what has since occurred in France, and from every part of her conduct, that the attempt did fail; and I am confident, that the

* Mr. Fox.

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majority of the country is not now represented by those gentlemen who are eager for negociation, and who wish for peace without security and without stability. I am no enemy to peace; but I must think that the danger of patching up a peace without any probable ground of permanency, is greater even than that of carrying on a war. With respect to the negociation at Lisle, I believed at that moment that the prosecution of the war was fraught with more danger to the country than the establishment of peace, if peace could have been concluded on such terms as were then proposed to the enemy. It was the result of a comparison between the farther prosecution of the war, and the then existing state of the country; a state different from that in which, I am happy to say, the country finds itself at this moment. I am free, Sir, to say, that the prevalence of jacobinical principles in France does not at present allow me to hope for a secure peace. As I declared upon a former occasion, without that attempt to obtain peace, we could not have made those subsequent exertions which have proved so successful. But because of our present increased means for carrying on the war, I ask the honourable gentleman, is it fair in him to argue that I was insincere in labouring for peace at a time, when the circumstances of the country dictated the expedience of attempting it?

We are told, however, that our policy ought to be changed, as the Russians are no longer to co-operate with Austria. But may not the Russians be employed with advantage in the common cause, though they no longer act immediately in conjunction with the Austrians? It is not for me to point out the particular way in which their force may be directed in conjunction with the moveable maritime force which this country possesses. I need not say how, while the frontiers of France are invested by a powerful military force, the Russians may co-operate in supporting those insurrections which actually prevail, and which threaten to break out in every part of France. May not these efforts produce a great and valuable diversion for the Russians? This is sufficient to show that their co-operation may still be extremely valuable. To say more would be no less improper than unnecessary.

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If, however, the Russians are not to assist the cause by their efforts upon the continental frontier of France, does it not become the policy of England, does it not consist with the wisdom of parliament, to employ every means to supply the loss which their departure will occasion? The measure in question aims at that object. It aims at procuring such reinforcements to the military exertions of our allies, as promise a vigorous and successful campaign. Upon a comparison, indeed, of the forces of France, with those which our allies will be enabled to bring against her, we will find that the latter are greatly superior. I cannot absolutely pledge myself that the forces of France shall not be increased in such a manner as to equal, if not outnumber those of the allies, but on every ground of conjecture the allies will maintain that superiority which they possessed last campaign. The measure in question is intended to secure that effectual co-operation, those military exertions which promise success; and if the propriety of persevering in the contest be admitted, as it has been, by the house, I cannot conceive what argument can be used against that which seems so necessary to its favourable issue.

An honourable gentleman* stated with a gravity which seemed to testify his sincerity in what he advanced, that twelve millions will be necessary to procure that supply of grain which this country requires. I trust that it will appear in the consideration of the report of the corn committee, that there has already been a very considerable supply of corn obtained, and that there is not so much to be apprehended on the score of scarcity as some suppose. But, besides that the honourable gentleman exaggerates the supply that will be required, he infers that we shall not be able to find pecuniary resources both for the war and to obviate the danger of scarcity. Doubtless, however, there is no difficulty in supplying both demands. No man who thinks the war right and politic will suppose that we ought to withhold those supplies which are necessary to support the contest with vigour, and bring it to a successful termination, because there happens to exist a scarcity which has no connexion with the war, and which the prosecution

* Mr. Nicholls.

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of it can in no way affect. The fallacy of ascribing that scarcity to the war is no less unfounded in reasoning than it is mischievous in its consequences.

It is for the house, then, to decide whether, in supporting this measure, we have judged on good grounds. If any man thinks he sees the means of bringing the contest to an earlier termination than by vigorous effort and military operations, he is justified in opposing the measures which are necessary to carry it on with energy. Those who consider the war to be expedient, cannot, with consistency, refuse their assent to measures calculated to bring it to a successful issue. Even those who may disapprove of the contest, which they cannot prevent by their votes, cannot honestly pursue that conduct which could tend only to render its termination favourable to the enemy. God forbid I should question the freedom of thought, or the liberty of speech! but I cannot see how gentlemen can justify a language and a conduct which can have no tendency but to disarm our exertions, and to defeat our hopes in the prosecution of the contest. They ought to limit themselves to those arguments which could influence the house against the war altogether, not dwell upon topics which can tend only to weaken our efforts and betray our cause. Above all, nothing can be more unfair in reasoning, than to ally the present scarcity with the war, or to insinuate that its prosecution will interfere with those supplies which we may require. I am the more induced to testify thus publicly the disapprobation which such language exacts in my mind, when I observe the insidious use that is made of it, in promoting certain measures out of doors; a language, indeed, contrary to all honest principle, and repugnant to every sentiment of public duty.

For the motion 162
Against it 19

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April 21, 1800.

THE house, pursuant to the order of the day, resolved itself into a committee, to consider of his Majesty's message relative to the propositions of the Irish parliament, for an incorporating Union with Great Britain; and Mr. Sylvester Douglas having taken the chair of the committee,

Mr. PITT rose:

Sir,—The sentiments of this and the other house have been so clearly and decisively expressed in the vote which was given on this important subject during the last session of parliament, that I feel it altogether unnecessary to renew the arguments then advanced and acceded to with respect to the advantage, expedience, and necessity of the measure. Recollecting, that the grounds then offered for the union of both kingdoms were so solid and unalterable as to meet with an almost universal concurrence; and also recollecting that the subsequent discussions which have taken place in the parliament of the sister kingdom, must have confirmed and riveted the decision so unequivocally manifested in this country, I shall only trouble the committee so far as to recall the magnitude of the question which is now submitted to their consideration, and to remind them, that it is not one partial consideration, not a single provision, however great it might be, which claims their attention, but a consideration in which the dearest and most essential interests of both countries are most intimately connected. If we wish to accomplish the great work that we have undertaken, we must look to the whole of this important and complicated question; we must look at it in a large and comprehensive point of view; we must consider it as a measure of great national policy, the object of which is effectually to counteract the restless machinations of an inveterate enemy, who has uniformly and anxiously endeavoured to effect a separation between two countries, whose connexion is as necessary for the safety of the one, as it is for the prosperity of the other. We must look to this as the only measure we can adopt which can calm the dissentions, allay the animosities, and dissipate the jealousies which have unfortunately existed; as a measure whose

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object is to communicate to the sister kingdom the skill, the capital, and the industry, which have raised this country to such a pitch of opulence; to give to her a full participation of the commerce and of the constitution of England; to unite the affections and resources of two powerful nations, and to place under one public will the direction of the whole force of the empire:—We must consider this as a measure, Sir, the object of which is to afford an effectual remedy for those imperfections which exist in that precarious system that at present binds the two countries together; a system which, if an incorporate union should unfortunately not take place, may ultimately tend to their separation.

Sir, when these are the objects which are to be obtained by this measure, the committee will not, I am sure, consider it as a measure of partial or local convenience, or of partial or local sacrifice; but in forming their opinions they will consider its general effect upon the whole of the aggregate of the empire. In deciding on this question, we ought to be actuated by another feeling, a feeling which it is not necessary for me to state, because the magnanimity of every gentleman must have suggested it to his own mind. In the union of a great nation with a less, we must feel that we ought not to be influenced by any selfish policy, that we ought not to be actuated by any narrow views of partial advantage. We must refute by our conduct (what indeed we might have hoped our terms had already refuted, if what fell from an honourable gentleman this day did not unfortunately prove that a degree of unaccountable prejudice still existed) the idea that we have any other object in view than that of promoting the mutual advantage of both kingdoms. We must shew that we are not grasping at financial advantages, that we are not looking for commercial monopoly; we must shew that we wish to make the empire more powerful and more secure, by making Ireland more free and more happy. These, Sir, are the views—these are the only views with which I could ever have proposed this measure; and it is with these views alone that it can be rendered effectual to its object, and establish mutual harmony and confidence between the two nations.

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But it is not merely a sentiment of generosity and magnanimity which influences her conduct; in thus striking a balance between two nations, justice requires that the greater share of advantage should fall to the less powerful one. Fortunately such has been the rapid progress which this country has made in commerce and in capital, that it has arrived at a degree of prosperity unexampled in the history of the world; that it is in a situation in which perhaps no other country ever was, either to treat with a friend, or to contend with an enemy: such are the rapid and unprecedented advantages which we are making in commercial prosperity, that, admitting that the adoption of this measure might be attended with particular inconvenience and local disadvantage, the wealth which the country will acquire, even while this discussion is going on, would much more than compensate for such particular loss. It is not necessary for me to detain the committee by dilating any more upon this part of the subject; I flatter myself that every gentleman who hears me, concurs with me in every sentiment which I have advanced. If, with feelings such as these, we proceed to the examination of these articles, with an intention of not overlooking any part of them, of examining them with a view to see whether they may require any alteration, but at the same time with a firm determination not to suffer small difficulties to stand in the way of important national arrangements and advantages; if, Sir, I say, we are actuated by these feelings, I hope the century will not conclude without the accomplishing of this great national work, which will give a full participation of our wealth and happiness to millions of our fellow subjects — which will place upon a firm basis the connexion between the two countries, and will augment and secure the strength and prosperity of the empire.

I will not trouble the committee with any further observations of a general nature; I will now take a view of the resolutions which have been laid before us, and which have been agreed to by the parliament of Ireland. It will be necessary for us to see how far they accord with those which were agreed to last session in the British parliament; and how far that which they have altered,

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or added, is objectionable. In looking at them with this view, it will be seen that the first article merely relates to the name of the United Kingdoms, upon which I apprehend no difference of opinion can subsist. The second article relates to the succession of the crown, and which is precisely the same as that which was agreed to by the parliament of Great Britain. In the third article is the beginning of the detail, which must necessarily take place in treaties of this sort between independent nations. It divides itself into five leading branches, viz. the regulations with respect to the imperial legislature; the provisions for the security of the established church; the regulation of the commercial intercourse between the two countries; the arrangement of their respective proportions with respect to revenue; and, finally, the provisions relative to courts of justice. In examining and deciding upon these resolutions, I must beg gentlemen to compare them with those which were agreed to by the parliament of Great Britain, and transmitted to Ireland. In our resolutions we agreed that the whole of the United Kingdom should be represented in one imperial parliament—we stated, that the number and proportion which the members from Ireland should bear to those of Great Britain, and the regulations respecting the mode of their election, should be such as might be finally agreed upon by the respective parliaments of the two kingdoms. In these resolutions the parliament of Ireland have stated their opinions upon these points: the first and most important of which is, the share which they ought to have in the representation in the house of commons.

Upon a full consideration of the subject, the parliament of Ireland are of opinion, that the number of representatives for Ireland in the house of commons ought to be one hundred. Upon this subject, the first question to which I have to call the attention of gentlemen (supposing that they adhere to the resolutions of last session) is, whether the number so mentioned by the parliament of Ireland is so reasonable, and founded in such fair proportions, that we ought to agree to it? For my own part, Sir, I will fairly confess, that upon this part of the subject it does appear to me extremely difficult to find any precise ground upon

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which to form a correct calculation, or to entertain a positive preference for any one specific number of members rather than another: but I am the less anxious about it, because I do not consider the consequences as very important. In my view of representation, founded upon the experience of our constitution, I think we are entitled to say, that, if a nation becomes united with us in interests and in affection, it is a matter of but small importance whether the number of representatives from one part of the United Empire be greater or less. If there are enough to make known the local wants, to state the interests, and convey the sentiments of the part of the empire they represent, it will produce that degree of general security, which will be wanting in any vain attempt to obtain that degree of theoretical perfection, about which in modern times we have heard so much. Considering it in this point of view, (if the interests of the two countries are identified, and the number of representatives are adequate to the purposes I have mentioned,) I really think the precise number is not a matter of great importance. At the same time, when it is necessary that the number should be fixed, it is necessary to have recourse to some principle to guide our determination; and I am not aware of any one that can more properly be adopted, than that which was laid down in the discussions upon this part of the subject in the parliament of Ireland; I mean a reference to the supposed population of the two countries, and to the proposed rate of contribution. I do not think that the proportion of the population, or the capability of contribution, taken separately, would either of them form so good a criterion as when taken together; but even when combined, I do not mean to say that they are perfectly accurate. Taking this principle, it will appear that the proportion of contribution proposed to be established, is seven and a half for Great Britain, and one for Ireland; and that, in the proportion of population, Great Britain is to Ireland as two and a half, or three to one: so that the result, upon a combination of these two, will be something more than five to one in favour of Great Britain, which is about the proportion that it is proposed to establish between the representatives of the two countries.

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With respect to the mode in which these members are to be selected in order to be sent over to the imperial parliament, it is such as in my opinion must prevent the possibility of any suspicion arising in the minds of gentlemen. It is obvious that no wish was entertained by those by whom these articles were proposed, to introduce an additional number of members, with any view to an augmentation of the influence of the crown. If it is admitted that it would be highly inconvenient to add the whole of the house of commons of Ireland, which consists of three hundred members, to that of Great Britain, it is obvious that some principle of selection must be resorted to; and I cannot conceive any one that could have been adopted more equitable or satisfactory for Ireland, or less liable to objection. The plan proposed is, that the members of the counties, and of the principal commercial cities, should remain entire. With respect to the remaining members to make up the number of a hundred, without thinking of abstract principles, without talking about the difference between one description of boroughs and another, being obliged to make a selection, the plainest and most obvious mode is resorted to, with a view to the obtaining of local information, and to the security of the landed interest. The remaining members are to be selected from those places which are the most considerable in point of population and wealth. Those gentlemen who have objected to the introduction of theoretical reforms in the constitution, and in the representation of this country, will find that there is nothing in this plan which has a tendency towards that object, or which makes a distinction between different parliamentary rights. The plan which it is proposed to adopt, is the only one that could have been recurred to, without trenching upon the constitution. The committee must perceive, that, in acquiescing in this regulation, they will consent to an addition to the existing house of commons, without making any, the slightest, alteration in our internal forms; that this regulation is conformable to the resolution which last year met with the approbation of the parliament of Great Britain; and that no alteration is proposed in the numbers of the British house of commons.

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It would not, perhaps, be necessary for me to say any thing more upon this topic; yet knowing, Sir, how strong some opinions are on the subject, and knowing the share I formerly had myself in sentiments of that nature, I must declare that I do not wish to avoid the discussion. I rather desire to disclose my most secret thoughts upon the question of reform, as I do not think myself authorised, from a firm conviction of their purity and justice, to decline any investigation upon that topic, respecting which I did once entertain a different opinion. Whatever change may be found necessary in the parliament of Ireland, I maintain, Sir, that, by preserving the frame of the British parliament, we have one great and very peculiar advantage, of which it is impossible for any sophistry, for any arts, for any violence to deprive us. We have found this vast benefit in our adherence to practice in two distinguished instances; I mean with respect to Wales and Scotland. The union of England with both those countries was effected without any injury to the frame of the English parliament, and the effects resulting from that system have been productive of the most permanent utility. It might have been urged as an objection *à priori*, that the frame of parliament should be altered, but, fortunately for us, our ancestors preferred the preservation of that which experience had rendered dear to them. But, Sir, whatever may have been the opinions of different men upon the subject of reform, since it was first agitated in this country, I do not assume too much in saying it is now generally admitted, that we ought not to alter any thing beyond the immediate object of the alteration itself, and that we are called upon to do that with as little change as is consistent with the efficacy of the measure. In other words, Sir, I contend that it is necessary to confine the proposed change to that which requires to be changed, leaving every thing else entire. We are therefore to limit our alterations to Ireland, whose situation so imperiously calls for alteration, and to leave England untouched, and entire in the enjoyment of that which has uniformly constituted its certain defence and protection. But this is not all, and I beg leave to trouble the committee with a few more remarks, since this consideration has

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occurred in the discussion of the articles of union. If any gentleman recollects how little the friends of reform have at any time agreed upon a specific plan, how little the sense of the public has ever declared in favour of reform, how difficult the measure has been at all times allowed to be by its most enlightened and zealous supporters; how jarring and contradictory the opinions of those persons who patronized it must have been: I say, Sir, if gentlemen recollect all these striking and unanswerable circumstances, I shall only ask them, would it be wise and consistent to connect the question of union with the question of reform? If the union be of itself a measure of great difficulty, as it is generally admitted, I appeal to the candour of every man, would it be prudent, would it be safe, to involve it in a question of the greatest perplexity, of the most embarrassing nature, and attended with fatal consequences as to our internal interest?

On the ground then of prudence, what I have said must I think alone be sufficient: but as I do not wish to have the least reserve with the house, I must say, that if any thing could throw a doubt upon the question of union — if any thing could in my mind counterbalance the advantages that must result from it, it would be the necessity of disturbing the representation of England: but that necessity fortunately does not exist. In stating this, Sir, I have not forgotten what I have myself formerly said and sincerely felt upon this subject; but I know that all opinions must necessarily be subservient to times and circumstances; and that man who talks of his consistency merely because he holds the same opinion for ten or fifteen years, when the circumstances under which that opinion was originally formed are totally changed, is a slave to the most idle vanity. Seeing all that I have seen since the period to which I allude; considering how little chance there is of that species of reform to which alone I looked, and which is as different from the modern schemes of reform, as the latter are from the constitution; seeing that where the greatest changes have taken place, the most dreadful consequences have ensued, and which have not been confined to that country where the change took place, but have spread their malignant influence almost in every quarter of

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the globe, and shaken the fabric of every government; seeing that in this general shock the constitution of Great Britain has alone remained pure and untouched in its vital principles — [A cry of "Hear! Hear!" on the opposition side]—I wish gentlemen would hear me, and then answer me — when I see that it has resisted all the efforts of jacobinism, sheltering itself under the pretence of a love of liberty; when I see that it has supported itself against the open attacks of its enemies, and against more dangerous reforms of its professed friends; that it has defeated the unwearied machinations of France, and the no less persevering efforts of jacobins in England, and that during the whole of the contest it has uniformly maintained the confidence of the people of England;—I say, Sir, when I consider all these circumstances, I should be ashamed of myself, if any former opinions of mine could now induce me to think that the form of representation which, in such times as the present, has been found amply sufficient for the purpose of protecting the interests and securing the happiness of the people, should be idly and wantonly disturbed, from any love of experiment, or any predilection for theory. Upon this subject, Sir, I think it right to state the inmost thoughts of my mind; I think it right to declare my most decided opinion, that, even if the times were proper for experiments, any, even the slightest change in such a constitution must be considered as an evil. I have been led farther into this subject, from the temporary interruption which I met with, than I intended: but I did not mean to have passed by the subject of the Irish Members, without accompanying it with some observations on British representation.

I have next to state, that however these members may be chosen, there is one consideration which cannot fail to press itself upon our minds; I mean, that by the laws of England care has been taken to prevent the influence of the crown from becoming too great, by too many offices being held by members of parliament. In Ireland there are laws of a similar nature, but not quite to the same extent; so that it might happen that in the hundred members to be chosen, there may be a great number holding places

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It will occur to gentlemen that some provision ought to be made upon this subject. I feel this sentiment as strongly as any man; but gentlemen must be aware that it is impossible to provide against it by an article of union, to be binding upon the united parliament, because we have found from experience, that the number of offices to be held by members must always remain in the discretion of parliament, to be regulated from time to time as circumstances may require. On the other hand, if no regulation upon this subject is at present made, it may happen that in the first hundred members chosen there may be a great number holding places, and consequently under the influence of the crown, who will have to decide in the imperial parliament, upon the extent to which that influence ought to extend. The committee will recollect, that the greater number of the members that are to come over, will be the representatives of counties and the great commercial towns. Of these I believe there are not above five or six who hold offices. With respect to the remainder, it must be obvious, from the manner in which they are to be chosen, that it is impossible to ascertain exactly the number of offices they may hold; they cannot, however, exceed the number of twenty. Unless, therefore, the numbers of those holding places were so great as to excite real jealousy, it would not be necessary to deprive them of their places in the first instance, as their numbers would not be sufficient to have any great effect in deciding upon the question of the extent of the influence of the crown. I understand that a motion was made by a gentleman last week for an estimate upon this subject; but he must beware that such an estimate could not be made up in this country, nor even in Ireland, without great difficulty. I think nothing can be more fair than what I shall propose, viz. that no more than twenty of the persons so coming over shall hold places; and if it shall happen that a greater number of them than twenty hold places during pleasure, then these who have last accepted them shall vacate their seats; this will, upon the whole, I think, obviate every objection that can be made in point of principle.

We then proceed to the number of the other house of parliament; and their precise number, I own, does not appear to me a

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matter that calls for close investigation or minute inquiry. The number for Scotland, as we all know, is sixteen to represent the peerage, and for the commons forty-five. There may, indeed, be another view of considering it on the part of Ireland, different from that of Scotland, which is true to a given extent, and on which I shall observe hereafter; but in the view in which I take it at present, and thinking as I do, that the whole should be a representation having for its object the general welfare of the empire, the number cannot be very material; besides, we are to look at Ireland as represented locally by thirty peers, and also by those peers in England who possess great part of their property in Ireland; so that in comparison of the thirty-two Irish peers, there may be said to be no less than one-fifth to be added from the peers of Great Britain. With respect to the manner in which they are to be chosen, I can only say, that I have never heard of any objection to the arrangement which is proposed in the resolutions of the Irish parliament; should any opposition be offered to that branch of the subject, I should say, that the choice of the peers to represent the Irish nobility for life, is a mode that is more congenial to the general spirit and system of the establishment of a peerage, than that of their being septennially elected, as the nobility of Scotland are: upon the whole of that topic, I am satisfied that no gentleman in this house will think this part of the arrangement in any degree improper.

Another part branching out of this subject, is that which has attracted a great deal of observation—I mean the right reserved for the peers of Ireland, who are not elected to represent their own peerage, to the members of the house of commons of the united parliament in Great Britain, until they shall happen to be elected to represent the nobility of their own country. This has been described and stated as a subject fit for ridicule; I own I see it in no such light. If, indeed, they were subject to be chosen alternately to represent the lords and commons of Ireland, the objection would be well founded; but here they are not so; for when they are chosen to represent the nobility, they are so for life, and can never return to the house of commons: and by the way, I

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consider this a better mode than that which was adopted with regard to the nobility of Scotland; and my reason for it is this, that a nobleman in Ireland, if not chosen by his own order, may be chosen a legislator by a class of inferior rank, and which I am so far from regarding as improper, that I deem it in a high degree advantageous to the empire, analogous to the practice, as well as friendly to the spirit, of the British constitution. We know full well the advantages we have experienced from having, in this house, those who in the course of descent, as well as in hopes of merit, have had a prospect of sitting in our house of peers. Those, therefore, who object to this part of the arrangement, can only do so from the want of due attention to the true character of our constitution, one of the great leading advantages of which is, that a person may, for a long time, be a member of one branch of the legislature, and have it in view to become a member of another branch of it; this it is which constitutes the leading difference between the nobility of Great Britain and those of other countries. With us, they are permitted to have legislative power before they arrive at their higher stations; and as they are, like all the rest of mankind, to be improved by experience in the science of legislation as well as that of every other, our constitution affords that opportunity, by their being eligible to seats in this house from the time of their majority, until, in the course of nature, their ancestors make way for them in another house of legislation. This is one of those circumstances which arise frequently in practice; but the advantages of which do not appear in theory, until chance happens to cast them before us, and makes them subjects of discussion. These are the shades of the British constitution, in which its latent beauties consist. Now, upon this principle, and with this experience, I would ask if any Irish peer should come to his fortune, and who was well qualified to take a seat in this house, whether any man would feel it an improper thing, and in any way inconsistent with the practice of our constitution, or the general system of our legislature, for such a person to have a seat in this house? I would ask any man what objection he had against such a person mixing with us in this house? I say there can be none. I say further, that this is an advantage to the nobility

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of Ireland, and an improvement in the system of representation in the house.

The next point is, the power reserved for his Majesty to create new peers. The objection is, that they may be too large for the constituent body, and occasion a great deal of inconvenience to that which is elective. To this I answer, that they can never exceed a given number, and that it is necessary to give this power to the crown; for that the titles in Ireland are under very different circumstances from those of Scotland. In Scotland, the titles of nobility are much more ancient, under very different limitations, and must, from that very difference of limitation, continue much longer than those of Ireland: in the one, the titles are to descend to collateral branches; in the other, the patents are more limited, are confined to immediate male descendants, and consequently must much sooner expire. In the one, the probability of extinction is very small in the course of a vast period of time; in the other, it would certainly happen in a short time, if the power of adding to, or making up the number, were not given to the crown. The other part of this article, on the frame of the parliament of Ireland, relates to controverted elections, and the privileges of peerage to such as are not chosen to represent it; they continue under the same regulation as the peerage of Scotland.

The next article relates to the continuance of the church of Ireland, and of England, and of Scotland; upon which the articles differ in nothing from the articles which we ourselves have sent to Ireland, except under the head of a convocation, to which, I apprehend, there can be no objection. I shall only say this, on so interesting a subject, that the prosperity of the church of Ireland never can be permanent, unless it be a part of the union to leave as a guard, a power to the united parliament to make some provision in this respect, as a fence beyond any act of their own that can at present be agreed on. It may be proper to leave to parliament an opportunity of considering what may be fit to be done for his Majesty's catholic subjects, without seeking at present any rule to govern the protestant establishment, or to make any provision upon that subject.

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The next is an article of more detail, and on which the discussion may be more large hereafter than I can expect it to be at present—It is extremely interesting; I mean the article of Commerce. I am sure every gentleman in this house is ready to say, that the consequence of the union ought to be a perfect freedom of trade, whether of produce or of manufacture, without exception if possible; or that a deviation from that principle ought to be made only where adhering to it may possibly shake some large capital, or materially diminish the effect of the labour of the inhabitants, or suddenly and violently shock the received opinion or popular prejudices of a large portion of the people; but that, on the whole, the communication between the two kingdoms should in their spirit be free; that no jealousy should be attempted to be created between the manufacturers of one place and the other, upon the subject of "raw materials," or any other article: for it would surely be considered very narrow policy, and as such would be treated with derision, were an attempt made to create a jealousy between Devonshire and Cornwall, between Lancaster and Durham, between Northumberland and Scotland, between Wales and Chester, Hereford, or any other county. I say then, the principle of the union on this head should be liberal and free, and that no departure from it should ever take place, but upon some point of present unavoidable necessity. That perfect freedom of trade is your object and your end; and if in any instance you turn aside from that road, you only do it because you are convinced that on the whole matter you follow the shortest way to arrive at the end of your journey. I ought also to say, that some degree of local inconvenience is not to be set in the way of a great national arrangement; and happy am I to observe, that such is the enlarged judgment, and just and patriotic feeling, of the enterprising merchants of both nations, that they will be found, generally speaking, as forward as any member of this house to act up to the spirit of which I have just taken notice. All regulations, therefore, under the heads of bounties or prohibitions, and all subjects of that nature, should be made as moderate and equitable as possible.

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The parliament of Ireland have added an article of great importance, which is, however, consistent with the resolutions transmitted from this country; it is, that there shall not only be no new prohibition, but those now in existence, with a few exceptions, shall be repealed. It is a great satisfaction to me, that the articles are few, and that the duties do not exceed ten per cent. With respect to the woollen, they propose a protecting duty for the period of twenty years. With respect to the cotton manufacture, they also propose a protecting duty of ten per cent; but on two important branches of it, viz. the calico and the muslin, for the encouragement of which they are very anxious, the duties which they propose are considerably higher. In the whole of these alterations, I do not think there is any thing which can give any uneasiness to our manufacturers, except in the single case of the woollen trade. The manufacturers of this country do not, I believe, wish for any protecting duties; all they desire is a free intercourse with all the world: and though the want of protecting duties may occasion partial loss, they think that amply compensated by general advantage. In the article of wool, I understand, there is much difficulty entertained. In the case of manufactures, where capital is invested, protecting duties may for a time be required; but can any man believe that the exportation of manufactured wool from this country could be productive of any serious inconvenience in the present unexampled prosperity of our trade? Can any man believe that, by permitting this exportation, capital can be so immediately transferred as to occasion a sudden shock in any part of the country? This is a subject upon which I am anxious to obtain every information; but I am inclined to think, that the effect of this arrangement will be to encourage the growth of wool in Ireland, and that we may draw supplies of it from that country. I do not fear that there will be trade enough for both countries in the markets of the world, and in the market which each country will afford to the other; and I have no doubt but that the capitals of Great Britain and Ireland will be employed in that species of trade to which it can be applied with the most advantage.

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I beg pardon of the committee for anticipating with more particularity than was necessary, what may be hereafter said upon some of the subjects on which I have spoken, especially on that of trade; but I have done so because I wished to take a short survey of the general outline of this important subject. I am not aware of any thing very material which I have omitted; but if there should be, it may be supplied hereafter.

The next article, and the only one consisting of minute details, relates to apportioning the shares of the revenue of each country respectively. It were a circumstance much to be wished, that the finances of both countries were so nearly alike, that the system of both could be identified; but as from the different proportions of debt, and the different stages of civilization and commerce, and the different wealth of the countries, that desirable object is rendered impracticable, at least for some time to come, it becomes an important question, would you defer the advantage of the union because you cannot at once carry it to the extent you would wish? Or will you defer it until, by the increase of the debt of Ireland, and the decrease of the debt of England through the means of the sinking fund, the two countries had so far approximated to each other, that an identity of finance might be established in the first instance? But it had been said, what security can you give to Ireland for the performance of the conditions? If I were asked what security were necessary, without hesitation I would answer, none. The liberality, the justice, the honour of the people of Great Britain have never yet been found deficient. I would refer them to former precedents; I would desire them to look at our conduct towards those nations who have already incorporated with us, to Wales and to Scotland; that will convince them that there is the most perfect safety, even if there were no stipulation. But to avoid all suspicion of unduly loading our sister kingdom with more than her due share of the expenses of the state, to obviate all imputation of partiality, particularly as on that objection the opposers of the union grounded one of their most important objections, the parliament of both countries have fixed the proportions to be paid by each for a limited time at the expiration of

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which it is presumed the finances of each may so far approximate, that they may be assimilated and identified: with a provision, nevertheless, that if that desirable event can be effected sooner, the Imperial parliament shall have power to make any future revision or alteration. It most certainly will be desirable to ascertain, in as exact a proportion as possible, the quantity to be paid by each country. The plan I have already proposed is, as I think, the best that can be devised, not taking it from any one criterion, but from a blended and mixed consideration of the population and the revenue. Upon this the proportions are founded, and the ratio fixed for twenty years, unless the Imperial parliament shall make future regulations. And here it may be necessary to observe, that the finances of both countries may be identified, although the debt of England should exceed by a large proportion the debt of Ireland, because, by the rapid increase of the sinking fund, it may be as soon discharged as the debt of Ireland, and a large debt sooner discharged will be equivalent to a smaller debt requiring a longer term for payment. I have already stated, Sir, that the proportion of contribution of Ireland is to England, as about seven and one half to one; and this is calculated upon the consumption of the several articles, considered both as to their value, and their value compared with their bulk, and upon those articles of general use which seem to afford the materials for the surest ground of calculation, such as malt, tea, sugar, and others of that description. It has appeared from this investigation, that the proportion proposed in this resolution, has been the proportion, as nearly as can be ascertained, in which Ireland has contributed during the present war. It must be most satisfactory, Sir, to consider, that in adopting this arrangement, the present existing system is not at all disturbed. It will continue in its accustomed proportion; and at the same time, for the security of Ireland, it is provided that any article shall not pay a greater tax than the same article pays at the same in England. If there shall remain any surplus revenue after the current expenses are paid, it is to be appropriated either to the liquidation of the debt, or for the purposes of national improvement for that country. There then re-

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main some other regulations, which have for their object the gradual abolition of all distinction in finance and revenue between the two countries, and to accelerate the time when both countries form but one fund, and pay one uniform proportion of taxes throughout each. It is obvious, while there remains a disproportion of debt, they cannot form one fund, that event cannot take place till by the operation of circumstances that disproportion is destroyed; yet, Sir, as I have already observed, the real value of the respective debts may be alike before they are of the same magnitude, because if our sinking fund will discharge our larger debt, before the debt of Ireland can be discharged, though not of equal magnitude, the greater debt discharged in the shorter time may not surpass the less debt remaining a longer time unpaid; and whenever the real value shall be alike, the finances of both countries may be assimilated and identified, and it will remain in the discretion of the united parliaments to abolish all distinction of quotas and contributions, and fix one rate of taxation throughout the united kingdoms, subject merely to such local abatements as from circumstances may become necessary.

The remaining provisions are such as I conceive no gentleman in this house can object to; they relate to agriculture, and to the allowance to Ireland of a participation of your territorial revenue from India. I hope and trust that this plan is equitable on a large scale; favourable I know it is, satisfactory I hope, to Ireland; and I trust also, that in the main it will appear to this house that the whole has a tendency to accelerate the period of identity as well as union. The last article is one that has in it nothing new; it relates to the courts of justice in Ireland; it preserves to Ireland its civil and ecclesiastical courts, subject to the regulations which the wisdom of the united parliament may adopt.

I trust I have made myself understood in what I have stated to the committee under general heads, which will require detail hereafter. I have said enough to satisfy this committee, that the Irish parliament's resolutions are consistent with those which you laid at the foot of the throne, and pledged yourselves to carry

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into effect on your part, if ever, by his Majesty's command, they came again to you for consideration. When I recollect also, that the objection to the resolutions, when they were before the parliament of this country, was not so much to the substance of the resolutions themselves, nor the manner in which they were to be submitted to the parliament of Ireland, as that the subject should not then be agitated, because neither the parliament nor the people were in a state to agree to the measure; I trust I may say, that the fears which were expressed on that occasion were illusive, and the hope that was entertained has been verified. The ample discussion which every part of this subject has met with (so ample that nothing like its deliberation was ever known before in any legislature) has silenced clamour,—has rooted out prejudice,—has overruled objections,—has answered all arguments,—has refuted all cavils, and caused the plan to be entirely approved of. Both branches of the legislature, after long discussion, mature deliberation, and laborious enquiry, have expressed themselves clearly and decidedly in its favour. The opinion of the people who, from their means of information, were most likely, because best enabled, to form a correct judgment, is decidedly in its favour.

Let me not say, however, for I do not intend it, that there were among the intelligent part of the public none who were against the measure; I know there were, and I know too, that, in a question involving so many interests, the same thing will, to different individuals, appear in different points of view: hence arises a diversity of opinion. That has been the case in almost every thing that ever was argued, and must be so in every thing that is contested; but after all, it is clear that the parliament was in a situation, that the people of Ireland were in a situation, to judge of this measure. It was not because the measure was not vigorously opposed: the friends of the measure have had to stand against the threats of popular violence,—against the enemies of the government under the lead of protestants,—against the violent and inflamed spirit and fierce attack of the Irish catholics,—and against the aggregate of all evils, the spirit of all mischief, the im-

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placable opposition and determined hostility of furious jacobinism; they had to meet the inflamed passions of disappointed ambition, which, under the name and pretext of superior patriotism, under colour of jealousy for others' freedom, under unaffected tenderness for landed interest, affected care for commercial welfare, would reduce the state to ruin because they were not its rulers. Notwithstanding all this opposition, the parties engaged in it have not been able to prove any thing, but that their own fury was ungovernable, their predictions chimerical, and their hopes delusive. The friends of the measure have had to stand against the principles which fomented and unhappily inflamed the late Irish rebellion; they had to contend against the active but mischievous efforts of the friends and champions of jacobinism, to whom it was enough to make them hate the union, that it had a tendency to preserve order, because any thing like order was an extinction of their hopes. We have seen, that the wisdom of parliament and the good sense of the people of Ireland have prevailed over this mighty host of foes; we have seen the friends who supported, and the enemies who opposed this great national object; and are enabled, by all that has happened, to judge pretty accurately of the sentiments of both, with their tendency or effect on the fate of the British empire. It is under that confidence that I do what I am now doing, and will continue to do whatever may depend on me, to submit to the committee all necessary measures to carry this great and important work to its full, and, I trust, speedy accomplishment.

Mr. PITT then proposed the resolutions voted by the Irish parliament for the adoption of the committee.

Upon which Mr. Grey immediately moved an amendment; "That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, praying that he will be graciously pleased to direct his ministers to suspend all proceedings on the Irish Union, till the sentiments of the Irish people respecting that measure can be ascertained."

Mr. PITT concluded the debate with a short reply:

We were told, Sir, by honourable gentlemen last year, when the parliament was against the union, "reject it:" they tell us this

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night, when we know the parliament have voted the union, "appeal to the people." I never can consent to such doctrine. There may be occasions, but they will ever be few, when an appeal to the people is the just mode of proceeding on important subjects. The present is not a fit moment to appeal to the people of Ireland, when, if we do so, the whole economy of our legislative system, the customary proceedings in cases which involve the rights and liberties of the people, the jurisprudence of the country, would be thrown into confusion, and all this at a moment when we are about to effect that which the parliament of Great Britain has declared essential to the peace of Ireland and to the safety of the empire.

The ground that honourable gentlemen take to press this appeal is not less remarkable. They do it because they would know what is the opinion of the people of Ireland, which they assume beforehand is against the union. If they believe this, let them give us the proof, for theirs is the assertion. But, Sir, I adhere to the opinion of the parliament of Ireland, and will not therefore consent to a convocation of primary assemblies, and of bodies of men to vote addresses founded on French principles, arrayed as they would be against legislative authority and constitutional freedom. However, did we even resort to the people, who would take the expression of their opinion, given amidst tumult, in the fury of passion? Who would assume that opinion as fitting to be adopted for the rule of conduct in a great political undertaking? On the subject of any appeal in the present instance, it would be well if gentlemen recollected what was very properly, and, as far as it affected to go, conclusively stated by the noble lord * who spoke last. It cannot be unknown that the house never has adopted the determination of adverse parties immediately, but has acted on an opinion subsequently formed according to the change of time and circumstances. I know many who have entertained peculiar opinions on the affairs both of Ireland and England, especially during the present war, who have seen those opinions exploded by events; insomuch that certain gentlemen, under the conviction of the entire approbation

* Lord Carysfort.

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of the people of the measures of his Majesty's government, have retired from this house, have chosen to neglect their duty to their constituents, to desert the post of honour, or of danger, because those measures are approved of by the people.

Such then is the fallacy of the general opinions of those honourable persons who, added to the weight of their own very grave authority, ask us this night to resort to public meetings, there to collect the sentiments of a mixed populace. Could the appeal be made, what pledge do the honourable gentlemen give that the meeting shall be orderly, decent, and temperate? Those gentlemen have a ruling passion, which seems on all great occasions to incline them to unfurl the banners of popularity to the mob; but leaders have not less frequently paid the forfeit than followers. The honourable member has quoted a great master of human nature*, to illustrate his opinion of a popular election. That poet, as if he had foreseen the period,—as if the political intrigues of common halls had been familiar to him, has well pourtrayed the character of such a scene. The returns of members by common halls, and the subsequent return by scrutiny, have shewn how practised are certain politicians in the art of swelling the number of a popular meeting. Yet such seems to be the necessary consequence of popular appeals. When I consider how defective must be an opinion that is the result of an appeal to a people wholly influenced by a few factious demagogues, I must tell the honourable gentleman, I could not adopt the opinion of the people of Ireland collected at primary assemblies. But the people of Ireland approve of the

* Mr. Grey, in describing the clandestine manner in which the Irish petitions had been obtained in favour of the Union, had quoted the lines of Buckingham in Shakespeare's King Richard the Third;

——— "Some followers of mine own,
"At lower end o' the hall, hurl'd up their caps,
"And some ten voices cried, God save King Richard!
"And thus I took the 'vantage of those few—
"Thanks, gentle citizens and friends, quoth I;
"This general applause, and cheerful shout,
"Argues your wisdom, and your love to Richard."

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union; they have in effect concurred in it; and it becomes the wisdom of the parliament of Great Britain to consolidate the interests of the two countries, by agreeing to a measure of which the certain operation will be to promote and perpetuate the prosperity, the power, the resources, and the independence of the empire.

The amendment was rejected,

Ayes 30
Noes 286

And the three first resolutions were then moved and carried without further opposition.

November 11, 1800.

DEBATE on the Address in answer to his Majesty's most gracious Speech* on opening the session.

Mr. PITT:

Whatever variety of opinion may occur in the progress of the discussion of those points to which the speech from the throne, and the address to his Majesty, direct the attention of parliament,

* "*My Lords and Gentlemen,*

"My tender concern for the welfare of my subjects, and the sense of the difficulties with which the poorer classes particularly have to struggle, from the present high price of provisions, have induced me to call you together at an earlier period than I had otherwise intended. No object can be nearer my heart, than that, by your care and wisdom, all such measures may be adopted, as may, upon full consideration, appear best calculated to alleviate this severe pressure, and to prevent the danger of its recurrence, by promoting, as far as possible, the permanent extension and improvement of our agriculture.

"For the object of immediate relief, your attention will naturally be directed, in the first instance, to the best mode of affording the earliest and the most ample encouragement for the importation of all descriptions of grain from abroad. Such a supply, aided by the examples which you have set on former occasions, of attention to economy and frugality in the consumption of corn, is most likely to contribute to a reduction in the present high price, and to ensure, at the same time, the means of meeting the demands for the necessary consumption of the year.

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I flatter myself, that when the real question for the decision of the house is fairly explained, all differences must cease, and all topics of division be suspended. Believing it to be equally the object of

" The present circumstances will also, I am persuaded, render the state of the laws respecting the commerce in the various articles of provision, the object of your serious deliberation. If, on the result of that deliberation, it shall appear to you that the evil necessarily arising from unfavourable seasons has been increased by any undue combinations or fraudulent practices, for the sake of adding unfairly to the price, you will feel an earnest desire of effectually preventing such abuses; but you will, I am sure, be careful to distinguish any practices of this nature from that regular and long established course of trade which experience has shewn to be indispensable, in the present state of society, for the supply of the markets, and for the subsistence of my people.

" You will have seen with concern the temporary disturbances which have taken place in some parts of the kingdom. Those malicious and disaffected persons who cruelly take advantage of the present difficulties to excite any of my subjects to acts in violation of the laws and of the public peace, are, in the present circumstances, doubly criminal, as such proceedings must necessarily and immediately tend to increase, in the highest degree, the evil complained of; while they, at the same time, endanger the permanent tranquillity of the country, on which the well-being of the industrious classes of the community must always principally depend.

" The voluntary exertions which have on this occasion been made for the immediate repression of these outrages, and in support of the laws and public peace, are therefore entitled to my highest praise.

" *Gentlemen of the House of Commons,*

" Under the circumstances of the present meeting, I am desirous of asking of you such supplies only as may be necessary for carrying on the public service, till the parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland may conveniently be assembled.

" The estimates for that purpose will be laid before you; and I have no doubt of your readiness to make such provision as the public interests may appear to require.

" *My Lords and Gentlemen,*

" I have directed copies to be laid before you, of those communications which have recently passed between me and the French government respecting the commencement of negociations for peace. You will see in them fresh and striking proofs of my earnest desire to contribute to the re-establishment of general tranquillity. That desire, on my part, has hitherto been unhappily frustrated by the determination of the enemy to enter only on

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every man present to promote, to the utmost of his power, and to the best of his judgment, the alleviation of that distress under which the community labours, I cannot suppose that gentlemen will find any ground of dissension in an address, the chief purport of which is merely to thank his Majesty for the opportunity which he has given to parliament, of entering upon the consideration of the subject.

The speech, and the address founded upon it, comprehend two great leading topics. They state, and propose for the deliberation of parliament, the difficulties under which the public now labour from a succession of unfavourable seasons. They naturally point to an investigation of the causes of the calamity, and the remedies of which it is susceptible; and in allusion to the recent communications which have taken place with the enemy, they bring under review, in regular progress, the important question of peace or war. These, however, are questions which are rather to be entered for future deliberation, than brought forward for specific opinion and immediate resolve.

Upon the first of these objects, what does the speech recommend as necessary? What does the address desire the house to do? In both, a strong and anxious feeling is expressed for the miseries of the various classes who suffer by the high price of pro-

a separate negociation, in which it was impossible for me to engage, consistently either with public faith, or with a due regard to the permanent security of Europe. My anxiety for the speedy restoration of peace remains unaltered; and there will be no obstacle or delay on my part, to the adoption of such measures as may best tend to promote and accelerate that desirable end, consistently with the honour of this country, and the true interests of my people; but if the disposition of our enemies should continue to render this great object of all my wishes unattainable, without the sacrifice of these essential considerations, on the maintenance of which all its advantages must depend, you will, I am confident, persevere in affording me the same loyal and steady support which I have experienced through the whole of this important contest, and which has, under the blessing of Providence, enabled me, during a period of such unexampled difficulty and calamity to all the surrounding nations, to maintain unimpaired the security and honour of these kingdoms."

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visions, and the remedy proposed is an early, expeditious, and effectual mode of obtaining supply by importation, aided by a narrowed and economical application of the resources which our own means afford. Whatever difference of sentiment may exist respecting the causes of the evil; whatever views may be entertained respecting the most effectual remedies, all, I am persuaded, must feel how delicate the subject is, how difficult the discussion, how careful the legislature must be in the adoption of specific measures of remedial policy. But, aware of these circumstances, all must at the same time be sensible that two modes of relief, simple, practical, safe, and effectual, are placed within our reach. The first of these is importation from abroad. Experience has sufficiently proved the efficacy of this resource. We know, by the most authentic documents, that the importation last year exceeded any thing that had ever taken place within the same space of time. The importance and necessity of this expedient must at once be recognized. We have likewise the satisfaction of knowing that we possess the means of rendering this aid effectual. Great as the last year's importation was, it is in our power to render that of the present more extensive. This is to be done by the use of bounties, on the principle acted upon last year, by which provision was effectually made that the expense of the bounty should never be imposed on the country, but when the necessity for it existed, and when the advantage of it was ascertained. That principle will be again applied, with the benefit of former experience. The assistance derived from it will be increased in proportion to the more favourable harvest in foreign countries: it is consolatory to know, that, on the continent of Europe, as well as in America, the crops have been productive; and no doubt can be entertained, that the wealth of this country must command a supply that cannot fail to relieve the difficulties under which we labour.

As to the other object, the diminution of consumption, and the employment of substitutes, the unfortunate experience we have had of the efficacy of these expedients enables us to call them into action with new advantage and effect. In 1795 and 1796, and in

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the course of last year, we had derived much relief from the examples of economy which were set, and it will be our business now to practise upon the knowledge we have acquired. We shall now be able, upon an enlarged observation, to render substitutes available, to turn every thing to profit.

Thus much I have said upon the nature of the remedies pointed out in the speech and address, to show that in their nature they cannot produce any difference of opinion. They must be admitted by all to be salutary and indispensable. I hope too, that what I have urged will be considered as a full justification for proceeding with all possible expedition to give effect to them. I trust that it will be considered as a ground sufficient for me to propose, that even before we separate, the house should resolve itself into a committee of the whole house, to ascertain and vote the amount of the bounties which it will be proper to grant. It must be felt, that no measure presses so much as this; nothing can be more important than immediately to animate and to fix the exertions of the importer, by specifying the allowance to which he will be entitled. The second object is one which requires no more delay in the adoption; but it is less a matter for legislative arrangement, though in that way, something may be done by regulation. From example it is most likely, however, to obtain its full operation. Upon the consideration of these simple and easy remedies, every man must see, that whether the harvest has been deficient in a greater or less degree, more will be done to afford effectual relief to the community than any doubtful experiment of regulation to reduce the price of commodities, and to obtain the supply of the market with all the effect which the most confident might ascribe to it, could ever produce.

I trust, therefore, that I have completely shewn the necessity of the measures recommended in the speech, and the propriety of adopting them without delay. Our agreeing to these preliminary steps by no means precludes farther inquiry, or more deliberate determination. But at present no procrastination, no inquiry can be necessary to authorise the expedients which are proposed. Let investigation however be pursued—let remedies be suggested;

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the house will hear with impartiality, and decide upon conviction. I do not hesitate at the same time to declare, that, to go beyond the remedy which is plain, practical, sanctioned by the soundest principles, and confirmed by the surest experience, must ever be a dangerous course:—it is unsafe in the attempt, it is unworthy of a statesman in the design, to abandon the system which practice has explained and experience has confirmed, for the visionary advantages of a crude, untried theory. It is no less unsafe, no less unworthy of the active politician, to adhere to any theory, however just in its general principle, which excludes from its view those particular details, those unexpected situations, which must render the scheme of the philosophic politician in the closet inapplicable to the actual circumstances of human affairs. But, if it be unwise to be guided solely by speculative systems of political economy, surely it is something worse to draw theories of regulation from clamour and alarm. If we ought not to bend observation and experience to any theory, surely we ought much less to make just principles and tried courses yield to wild projects, struck out from temporary distress, the offspring, not of argument, but of fear; not of inquiry, but of passion; not of cool reflection, but of inflamed prejudice. No man, therefore, who duly considered the causes from which the prosperity of the country has arisen, who well understood the foundation on which it stood, could think for a moment that, to redress any supposed mischief which, in times of peculiar scarcity and distress, monopoly might be supposed to have occasioned, it would be right to strike at the freedom of trade, and the application of industry and capital. To do so, would be to bring us back to something worse than the system that prevailed five hundred years ago; inasmuch as the state of the country, the distribution of property, and the employments of industry were so infinitely different from what obtained at the period when that system prevailed. Indeed nothing could be more absurd than to suppose that such a scheme, even though suited to the æra from which it is derived, could be applicable to the new interests and demands of another state of society.

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But the system recommended by his Majesty is equally removed from these opposite extremes. It is that which true wisdom and enlarged policy alone will recognize; it is that alone, I am convinced, which the house will pursue in the application of the remedies which the case may require. Parliament will inquire, it will collect facts, it will seek information, it will examine evidence; and if an abuse is proved to exist, the remedy will be canvassed upon its own merits.

It is not my wish, in this stage of the business, to state any opinions which I may have already conceived upon the subject. In proceeding to the minute investigation of the subject, however, it is not amiss to point out the errors on both sides, from which remedial policy ought to be exempt. There are some sorts of remedies which it is right to shew can in no case be employed, as there may be abuses which it will be the desire of parliament to correct by every means in its power to employ. All, however, that the present question requires, is to express our readiness to concur in the measures necessary to promote importation and economy. For this purpose no time for deliberation can be requisite; we must already be prepared on these points with a clear opinion, and ready to pledge ourselves to give them the utmost effect.

On the causes by which the present high price is occasioned, there are, no doubt, many opinions; both the extent of the evils and the remedy have been disputed. The question is embarrassed by many prejudices. Some, whose motives are unquestionable, and the humanity of whose views is conspicuous, may have been led to give encouragement to the errors, and sanction to the clamours which have prevailed on the subject. Others, whose motives are more doubtful, have endeavoured to combine two distinct grounds of prejudice, and to connect the scarcity with the war. Thus upon two subjects, each in itself liable to much misconception, and in its nature demanding a cool examination, violent clamour has been raised; I trust, however, that there are but few who think it wise or useful to connect the discussion of these two topics. The causes of the scarcity, and the policy and

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necessity of the war, present distinct subjects of consideration; and none will blend the discussion of the latter with the former, who wish only to communicate information, and to suggest remedies.

An honourable baronet*, and an honourable gentleman† near him, have, indeed, attempted to connect the argument: but, with all deference to their talents, I confess I should, before advancing any thing in reply, wish to hear what more weighty arguments might be urged in support of the same side. It appears to me, that, on a general view, no man can contend that the war has any material tendency to increase an evil which can be traced to other causes. But, I perceive from the gestures of gentlemen opposite, that the doctrine, of which I had given the credit to the honourable baronet and the honourable gentleman who spoke last, is more generally entertained. On this point, then, we shall have an opportunity of a more detailed discussion on a future day. I must think, however, that it is not too much to expect from the candour, from the good sense, from the prudence of gentlemen on the other side, that the consideration of the high price of provisions should be guided only by views of public benefit; that no matter should be introduced into it for the purpose of collateral effect; for the purpose of creating undue feeling and unfounded clamours. By this candour I shall endeavour to guide my own conduct, and I shall be sorry to remark any deviation from it in others.

But, since this question has been started, I beg leave to hint a few general observations, which seem completely to overthrow the argument of those (if there be any) who seriously impute the dearness of provisions to the war. In a more detailed discussion I shall be ready to examine separately the effect of every tax which has been imposed since the year 1793; to state the utmost effect which it could be supposed to have produced directly or indirectly on the price of grain; and to prove that these taxes could form, even on the most exaggerated computation, a very inconsiderable part of the increased price of provisions. To shew that the war

* Sir Francis Burdett. † Mr. Robson.

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has not any general effect to raise the price of grain, consider only the price of grain at different periods of the present war, though the argument would be strengthened by a review of former wars. Three or four years have been years of comparative high price. In the years 1794 and 1795, the price was high; but in the interval of nearly three years that succeeded, that is, from about Michaelmas 1796 to Midsummer 1799, the price sunk perhaps too low for the fair profit of the farmer. The general price then in England (to which I confine my remarks) was from 48*s*. to 49*s*. a quarter. From Michaelmas 1798 to Lady-day 1799, it was not above 48*s*. How then, if the war were the cause of the dearness, did it happen that the effect, which on the hypothesis should have been increasing, was suspended during an interval of nearly three years; and when likewise, during these years, some of the taxes to which the effect is chiefly ascribed had been imposed? Previous to the last mentioned period (one of great cheapness), the triple assessment had existed a twelvemonth, and must have produced its full effect. This plain fact is alone worth a thousand inferences deduced by circuitous reasonings. I know not whether this fact will be an answer to the arguments that I have not yet heard, but I think it is at least a sufficient answer to those of the honourable baronet. In matters of this kind, it is the shortest way to employ such plain and familiar reasoning; and though it may not always be a safe and solid mode of argument to presume against the validity of an objection, I am persuaded that arguments like that which I have mentioned will often be found to answer by anticipation the statements by which they are opposed. I shall not enter into any comparative statement of the prices in former wars, nor insist on the ingenious arguments that have been adduced to show that war is favourable to lowness of price. It is deserving of remark, however, that this country, which from the period of the revolution, for a great part of the present century, had been used to export great quantities of grain, ceased to export and began to import in the middle of that peace which succeeded the most successful war in which this country ever was engaged. Thus it is clear, from a deduction of facts,

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that war of itself has no evident and necessary connexion with the dearness of provisions, and that there can be no reason for at all combining the question of scarcity with the distinct inquiry respecting the policy of the war.

There may, indeed, arise much difference on particular facts, on points of inference, and the nature of legislative operation; but there are leading principles that must be common to all who enter upon the discussion with candid and liberal sentiments. In the consideration of the present calamity we ought, as men of humanity, to look at it with the deepest feelings of compassion for the distresses of our fellow creatures; as public men, with a profound sense of the importance of watching over the welfare of the industrious classes of the community; as men of prudence, who are bound to provide for their interests, and who will not stoop to flatter their errors, we ought to consider it as a malady affecting the state; but one in a delicate spot, not to be incautiously touched—not to be treated with new and violent remedies:—to follow untried theories must be peculiarly fatal in a matter of so much nicety, and wherein errors must be of the most malignant and extensive mischief. In the prosecution of the inquiry, we ought to be open to information; indefatigable to examine, but careful to weigh, and cautious to proceed when the speculation of corrective regulation would lead to overthrow the good that we have proved, for projects not even recommended by plausibility.

As to the extent of the deficiency of the late harvest, it would be no less rash than unnecessary to give any opinion. For the practical remedies proposed, a knowledge of the precise deficit is not required. This, however, we know, that notwitstanding the clamour about monopoly previous to the harvest, it is now universally admitted that the old stock was very nearly exhausted. An early harvest, therefore, found us with less stock than usual; of course that stock, unless aided by importation from abroad and economy of our own resources, must be applicable to the consumption of a shorter period of time than usual. Having already mentioned substitutes, and remarked that experience had ren-

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dered us more familiar with their utility and the mode of their application, I shall just mention how they may be rendered more effectual on the present occasion. We know that last year the crops failed almost generally in all the articles of provision. This year, though wheat is short, several other kinds (particularly barley) are plentiful both at home and abroad. By the due application of the resources of economy and of substitutes, joined to importation, I am satisfied that the supply of the year will be made to answer the consumption. I do not wish to under-rate the difficulties of our situation; but this I will assert, that, if we employ proper precaution, and exercise becoming firmness, we have in our own power the remedy for the distress under which the country labours. I do not imagine, indeed, that any extraordinary and rapid diminution of price is to be expected; but if we abstain from all rash experiment in the established course of trade, there is the best reason to think that there will be a considerable reduction of price, a reduction gradual and permanent, one that will alleviate the distresses of the poor, without risking that increase of consumption which ought so much in the present circumstances to be avoided. Besides the actual deficiency this year, the late high prices might be accounted for on reflecting that the stock of last year was exhausted, that the farmer must have been unable both to provide for the demands of the market, and to prepare for the supplies of seed which a more favourable season had required.

This of itself is sufficient to explain the high price for several weeks, without supposing any great deficiency of crop, or any improper arts to keep back grain and to starve the market. It certainly was an unfortunate error to ascribe the prices too much either to the deficiency on the one hand, or to monopoly on the other. In the one case it gave a sanction to high price, and in the other to unfounded popular clamour. The past prices, however, I am fully convinced, ought not to be taken as a proof and index of what future prices may be. If the order of things by which the market has so long been regularly supplied be not disturbed by impolitic interference; if we are prudent to encourage importa-

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tion, and firm to oppose all useless waste, there must in the course of the year be a gradual abatement of price. In fact, as soon as the effect of importation and economy begin to be felt, no regulation will be necessary to supply the market and to reduce the price. The most prejudiced will see, that the surest remedy for monopoly, if it has existed (and I do not believe it has existed to any considerable extent), is to increase the quantity and to diminish the consumption, to which highness of price must essentially contribute. If corn has been kept up, it will be sufficient to bring it out, to show both to the grower and consumer that we have the means of rendering the supply of the whole year adequate to the demand. A proper diminution of price will then ensue: for no man who truly estimates the difficulty of our real situation, and the means by which alone it can be relieved, would desire that in a time of scarcity the price should experience a temporary depression to what it would be in a time of plenty. This would be to remove the necessary and most effectual corrective of scarcity.

I trust, therefore, that one of our first measures will be, to go into a committee of the whole house, to fix the quantum of bounty to be allowed on importation. I should next propose, that a select committee be appointed to investigate the subject of the scarcity, and to this committee will be referred that part of the King's speech which refers to this point. I should propose likewise, that the committee shall from time to time recommend such measures as seem on the result of its inquiry fit to be adopted. I do not wish to anticipate any of their measures; but one suggests itself, which may be of great benefit as a regulation, particularly if sanctioned by example. This would be, to direct that all parochial relief, instead of being given in money, or wheaten bread, shall be given in bread partly made up of some wholesome substitutes. I believe that this practice has already made its way in some parts, and it appears to me that its extension would be attended with the most beneficial effects.

Thus much I have thought it necessary to state on the two leading points respecting the scarcity. On the question of peace or war, I shall only observe, that, as the papers on which the merits

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of the case must be decided are not yet before the house, it would be premature to enter at large into the discussion. There certainly is nothing in the address which pledges any opinion of the house on that point: this pledge it gives indeed, which no man I hope will shrink from, that if peace cannot be concluded on terms consistent with public faith, with the national honour and interests, we shall continue to support his Majesty with that firmness, decision, and energy which this house has uniformly displayed. I cannot anticipate any difference of opinion on this head. The speech states what will no doubt appear distinctly from the communications that are about to be laid before parliament, that his Majesty could not negociate without separating his interests from those of his allies; and the importance of those alliances is justified by the desire of the enemy to dissolve them. If, then, the enemy advanced a pretension so unheard-of, as that his Majesty, as the price of connexion with them, should break his faith to those allies with whom he was connected; if, as the price of being united in amity with his Majesty, France wished to put an end to the union which subsisted between him and his allies, surely I ought not to presume that in such a preliminary to a negociation, any member of this house will find conditions, which prove the sincerity of those who pretend to be the friends of general tranquillity, or conditions to which his Majesty could have acceded. I trust, therefore, that as unanimity is desirable on every occasion, the house will without delay, and with a concurrence approaching to unanimity, proceed to declare its readiness to adopt such measures as alone are calculated to afford relief to the community. This is the only way to prove a sincere and enlightened regard to the interests and well-being of the poor. By shewing a real and substantial regard to their happiness, we shall guard against the consequences of the false and dangerous expectations with which, by factious persons, they have been deluded on the subject of the remedies of which their sufferings admit. Parliament cannot by any charm convert scarcity into plenty; but it is something to shew that no time is lost in adopting every practicable means of alleviating the present distress, and ensuring the regular subsis-

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tence of the people. In the further discussion let us proceed with caution, and examine with impartiality. Let us act with proper temper, firmness and sobriety, that we may be able to discover where the cause of the evil really rests, and apply the remedy which will be truly serviceable.

The House, after negativing an amendment proposed by Mr. Grey, agreed to the address without a division.

November 27, 1800.

On a motion of Mr. Tierney for the House to resolve itself into a committee, to inquire into the State of the Nation,

Mr. Pitt spoke to the following effect:

Sir—The honourable gentleman *, in the speech which he has just concluded, has gone over a most extensive range of argument, and indeed has extended the topics of discussion beyond the notice which he first gave of his intention. It seemed to be his original view to confine the object of the inquiry he proposed to move, to points connected with the high price of provisions. He talked of moving to have the governor of the Bank examined respecting the influence which the operations of the bank and of paper circulation might have produced upon the price: but he has now abandoned these restrictive views; he has not mentioned a word of the examination of the governor of the bank, and has thought it better to move for a committee of the whole house on the state of the nation, as best fitted to investigate that infinite variety of subjects which he has dwelt upon as the grounds of inquiry. It is natural, therefore, that the honourable gentleman's topics should be numerous. The question of peace and war; the operations of our military force; the conduct of those by whom they are planned or executed; our alliances; our financial situation; the state of our constitutional rights, though introduced by the honourable gentleman in a parenthesis; our internal circumstances, with which the

* Mr. Tierney.

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dearness of provisions and its remedies are all connected thus form the natural topics to which a motion, like that which has been made, must be directed.

The honourable gentleman has said what is true, undoubtedly, of every important occasion in which this house is called upon to deliberate, that the eyes of the country are upon us. The eyes of the country indeed are most earnestly fixed upon us. They look with expectation, as they must feel the good or the bad consequences which result from our decisions. The measures in which the house has been occupied during the preceding part of the session have, in the highest degree, engrossed the attention of the public, and their hopes have not been disappointed. They see the attention of parliament directed to the consideration of the difficulties under which the community labours, and employing every practical remedy to alleviate their distress. I am convinced too that the people are well aware that those do most for their cause, and are most sincerely impressed with their sufferings, who confine themselves most closely to the immediate object of relieving the calamities under which they labour. I do not say that the whole situation of the country may not form a fit subject for inquiry in a committee of the whole house, if strong and conclusive grounds for it can be established. But I must contend that a committee on the state of the nation is that which, for the last hundred years, has very rarely been moved, and still more rarely complied with. The instances when it led to any practical advantage, are fewer still. It has indeed been employed in some urgent cases, where the topic of inquiry had a direct influence on the whole frame of the government. Such were the committee on the India bills, and, more recently, during the unfortunate illness of his Majesty, when the question of the regency was to be determined. At present the only thing to be considered is whether the circumstances of our situation be such as to demand that general inquiry which the honourable gentleman recommends, or specific investigations directly leading to practical measures.

With respect to the large and complicated question of peace and

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war, I believe that upon that, as upon every other point of national interest, the eyes of the people are turned upon parliament; but I do believe that at the present period they do not expect that they can form the subject of our decision or of our discussion. I believe, that the general feeling of the house and of the public upon the subject of peace and war is, that the question is no otherwise changed since we were last assembled, than in this respect, that since that period his Majesty has given the strongest and most unequivocal proofs of his sincere desire for peace: he has shewn his willingness to make great sacrifices for the attainment of so desirable an object; and his efforts have been frustrated by the unreasonble and unexampled demands of the enemy, which have prevented the setting on foot such a negociation. Under these circumstances, those who are anxious for the attainment of peace, if they want one consistent with the honour and safety of this country, will feel that the best way of contributing to that object will be to continue to place that confidence in his Majesty's government which they have hitherto done; to strengthen his hands; and to teach our enemies, that the support which has been given to his Majesty will be continued with that firmness and determination which has hitherto been attended with such happy effects. Having stated thus much, I think, upon these general grounds, it rests with the gentlemen on the other side of the house to prove, that when parliament is assembled for a particular purpose, and when the general state of things seems only to confirm us in the determination, with which we so lately separated, of supporting this contest with steadiness, it rests, I say, with the gentlemen on the other side, to state what are the new grounds upon which they call upon us to inquire. When, Sir, I ask for new grounds, it may perhaps be a little uncandid with respect to the motion itself, because the greater part of the objects which the honourable gentleman has represented as calling for inquiry, are objects with respect to which it is impossible to give new grounds; for the house must have perceived, that most of the events to which he has alluded are such as he has had frequent opportunities (and the honourable gentleman cannot be accused justly of having neglected

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many of them) of bringing under the consideration of the house. He has frequently made them the subjects of motions, and stated them as fit cases of inquiry; and the house has as often had opportunities of expressing its opinion on these points. Thus every part of his argument respecting the conduct of the war (except only that part of it which relates to events which have happened since the month of July last) has been over and over again discussed and decided upon. I might, therefore, upon all these topics, unless the honourable gentleman had advanced something new, which he certainly has not, have contented myself with referring to the former decisions of parliament upon them, when the events were still fresh in the memory of every one.

But, Sir, I confess that the mode of recapitulation which the honourable gentleman has employed I cannot allow to pass without animadversion. The honourable gentleman begins with remarking upon a declaration of my right honourable friend*, that the present was a war of unexampled success; but he did injustice to the assertion by omitting the limitation with which it was coupled, namely, that it was a war of unexampled success, in relation to the share which Great Britain had taken, and with regard to her peculiar interests. That my right honourable friend's position is strictly just, appears even from the admissions of the honourable gentleman. He allows that that part of our national force, that which he himself and his friends have extolled as the only service on which we should rely for defence, has been glorious and successful beyond any former example. Does not this prove that in regard to the peculiar share of this country in the contest, it has been most successful? Why then, even upon the view of a joint war of various success, and embracing so many objects, does the honourable gentleman choose to keep out of consideration that part of it recognized to be our particular province, and implying an exclusive merit? How can he affirm that the war has been full of disgrace, when our navy, by his own confession, has acquired such unrivalled distinction? This then is the candour with which the honourable gentleman commences a

* Mr. Dundas.

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motion for such various and extensive enquiry. But does the honourable gentleman say, that, on the general view which he takes, those naval exertions in which he exults have been attended with no advantage to the cause of Europe? Does he think it nothing to have completely destroyed the navy and commerce of our rival? It is nothing to have protected our own trade, to have augmented our own resources, by the spoil of the enemy's possessions? But not to dwell on these clear and undeniable testimonies of separate success and peculiar advantage, will it be said that our allies have derived no advantage from the victories of the British fleets? If our military operations were even to be laid out of view; if we were to forget for a moment that our armies have, on different occasions, given the most important aid to the common cause; that they have never encountered in the field the force of the enemy without reaping their full share of glory; considering the benefits that have resulted from our naval exploits alone, have we had no share in contributing to the defence of Europe? Does the honourable gentleman recollect the achievement of the gallant Lord Nelson, whose merit he so highly extolled? Does he think that, great as was our share of the glory and success of that gallant admiral's exploits, we engrossed them all? Does he think that the fame of the battle at Aboukir did not pervade all Europe? Does he think that it was partial in its effects, or fleeting in its glory? No! The fame of that day spread itself to the remotest corner of the globe. It added a new lustre to the British character, and inspired a new reverence for the British name; which I will not say the honourable gentleman's speeches, but not even the effect of any future calamity, can ever be able to efface. The noble commander deserved the panegyric the honourable gentleman pronounced on him. It was he that gave the direction to the bravery of his companions, and to the force with which he was entrusted, which carried so plentiful a harvest of glory to the country. But it is no derogation from the merit of Lord Nelson, or from the zeal and courage of those who seconded his enterprises, to ask whose exertions made that fleet disposable? Was there no merit in supplying the means by which the battle of Aboukir was fought?

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The honourable gentleman asked, was not intelligence to be purchased? Might not ministers have ascertained the destination of the fleet that sailed from Toulon? To that species of foresight which determines by the event, there may seem no judgment requisite to weigh and to compare intelligence, and to draw a just conclusion from contradictory or doubtful information. Can it be forgotten with what unparalleled secrecy Sir Roger Curtis was detached to the Mediterranean, on pretence of being sent to guard Ireland against threatened invasion; and that he had actually arrived there before his coming was suspected—before it was known in this country that he had gone thither? Does the honourable gentleman think that this vigilance and precaution had no share in producing that achievement to which he pays so just a tribute of admiration? It is impossible. It requires but the short enumeration I have made to draw from the honourable gentleman's admissions a testimony in favour of the vigilance and conduct of administration. Review our operations; let us consider whether they have been of advantage to Europe. Can it be forgotten how often our successes have animated our allies, depressed and discouraged, to new efforts in their own defence? How often have the achievements of our navy enabled our allies to combine new measures of resistance against the common enemy? How often has the greatest separate success been felt, and recognised as a new impulse given to Europe—as new courage and confidence to those nations who had the fortitude to bear up against danger, and to prefer strenuous resistance to dastardly submission? When was it ever known in the history of the world, that the exploits of a nation, limited by its insular situation to a certain sphere of operation, have produced such decisive results, and communicated such important advantages to remote and distant allies?

But the honourable gentleman says that the principal advantages we have obtained, in the view that he admits any advantages at all, have been at the expense of nations lately our allies. Are we to be told that the successes we have obtained over the Dutch and Spaniards are not to be viewed as acquisitions, not celebrated as triumphs? Is it nothing to have gained advantages

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over the vassals of France; over states that pusillanimously gave up their means and their resources to a power which they had not the courage boldly to resist? If the Dutch were forcibly converted into the allies of France, as I think they are, though the honourable gentleman on former occasions found it convenient to view them as willing ones, it might in particular circumstances have been disagreeable to direct against them the destruction of hostile operation. If they had boldly exerted the courage and perseverance of their ancestors in the defence of their independence—if they had demanded in vain the assistance of this country to combine its efforts with theirs against the enemy of their liberties, and those of Europe—if, as some of the honourable gentleman's friends advised, we had, in defiance of the sacredness of treaties, refused to fulfil our engagements—if we had refused to lend them our troops to fight by their side, as in former times, against these invaders, then might we have been accused of turning against them our arms, when acting in a compulsive hostility, which we had contributed no friendly assistance to avert. But when we saw those resources, which, if manfully drawn forth, would have secured independence, employed to increase the wealth and to support the hostility of France, were we to hesitate to deprive them of that which was to be employed to our annoyance and destruction? If the wealth, the resources, the naval and military resources of the Dutch were identified with those of France, who will deny that it was politic and necessary to prevent the possessions of the Dutch from being converted into instruments of hostility in the hands of their subduers, against a people who had disinterestedly exerted themselves for their protection?

The same course of argument was employed in regard to Spain; we were told by the honourable gentleman that we had rendered Spain, but little inclined to annoy us, an active and important ally of our enemy. Spain, he says, was our friend. Well! Did she not abandon us in defiance of the most solemn engagements? I do not recollect that, in the discussions which the subject of the war has so often produced, a single voice was

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ever heard in this house to doubt the pusillanimity, the want of faith, the atrocity, which distinguished the treacherous departure of the councils of Madrid from the cause of Europe. Never was there a single voice heard to doubt the justice of our warfare against a state, that basely shrunk from the ties of a generous confederacy to the degradation of a hollow alliance with the foe she detested. If then Spain, like Holland, ingloriously forsook a manly, though a dangerous struggle, and became the humble vassal of France, were we to allow the preponderance of the enemy to draw forth and embody against us all the means of Spain? Were we to see the navy of Spain united to that of France without an effort to disconcert or to punish that foul association? Can we forget that the only achievement of the French fleet, escaped for a moment from years of blockade, was to sail to Cadiz, and bring off, in triumph, the Spanish fleet, to be retained in Brest, partly as an hostage against Spain, and as an instrument of hostility against this country? And does the honourable gentleman think it provoking the Spaniards; that it is unmanly, unnecessary hostility, to prevent the remnant of the navy of Spain from being surrendered into the hands of the enemy—no less as a badge of the ruin and submission of that wretched kingdom, than as affording additional means to our rivals to execute their plans of inveterate acrimony towards the peace and prosperity of the British Empire?

The honourable gentleman ran over the catalogue of the colonial possessions we had acquired with a strange air of indifference, as if what he enumerated had been something too vile and worthless to dwell upon. I do not intend merely more than the honourable gentleman to dwell upon these points, though the consideration that it was a review of our triumphs, of the memorials of our glory, might render the survey not unpleasant or unprofitable. Martinique, St. Lucie, Tobago! And does the honourable gentleman really proceed through the enumeration with that sovereign contempt which he professes? I recollect that, in the last peace, in which I had some share, these islands in the West-Indies were supposed to have no small importance. The ho-

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nourable gentleman was not then in parliament, and there is nothing of system or connexion in his opinion to lead me to conjecture what might have been his sentiments on the topics then disputed. But I remember well that some of those gentlemen, whom I have long been accustomed to see opposite to me, and one or two of whom I still perceive, particularly one honourable gentleman*, whose accuracy will correct me if I am wrong, contended strenuously for the importance of these islands. St. Lucie alone was represented to be something equal in value to Martinique, which was called the key of the West-Indies. I know not, indeed, how their value may now have been sunk; though in all the circumstances which attended the last peace, the cession of Tobago alone was considered as a shameful abandonment of our national interests. Those who clamoured for that peace were, I confess, sufficiently disposed to object to its provisions after it was concluded. But notwithstanding, however, the situation of the country, and the circumstances under which the American war terminated, all authorities admitted the importance of those islands which the honourable gentleman now holds so cheap.

The honourable gentleman mentions Newfoundland as another of our conquests. Newfoundland we could not conquer, because we had not lost it; but we took the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon. I need not, I am sure, Sir, inform the house, that the fisheries of Newfoundland have been for a century the constant object of rivalship between France and England: from the peace of Utrecht to the present time, it has formed one of the most important points in every negociation; and one of the strongest objections to the last peace was, that the district reserved for our fisheries was not large enough: and therefore, Sir, I cannot think the catalogue of our conquests quite so trifling and unimportant as the honourable gentleman seems inclined to represent it.

May I venture to ask the honourable gentleman, whether the possession of Minorca is of importance to this country, though

* Mr. Sheridan.

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in enumerating our acquisitions it almost escaped his notice? The honourable gentleman did not indeed forget the capture of Malta: but he says, we must not mention it as an acquisition, because it did not belong to France at the beginning of the war. The honourable gentleman seems, indeed, to have set down a very extraordinary and whimsical regulation with respect to what we are to call acquisitions. He enlarges upon the injury which this country will sustain from the French being in possession of Egypt; but if it is an injury, surely our possessing Malta must be in our favour, either to facilitate our efforts for driving them out of Egypt, or to render their possession of it less disadvantageous to us. But mark the singularity and *consistency* of the honourable gentleman's argument; we must not take any credit from the conquest of Malta, because the French did not possess it before the war; yet the advantage which the French will derive from the possession of Egypt is strenuously insisted upon, though they were not in possession of it at the commencement of hostilities! But it is said that we have absorbed all the possessions of the Dutch. It is true that we have obtained possession of those places which, however little their intrinsic value to us, may be an object of great importance as the keys of the East. Will it be denied that, if ever the Dutch should again be disposed to renew that alliance with us, which in former times has proved no less beneficial to both countries than to Europe in general, it will be more advantageous for them to have those possessions under the guardianship and keep of Great Britain, than in the hands of France? We know that, in 1787, they would have been seized as instruments of annoyance to this country: they would now have been employed to the same purpose. We were bound by self-defence to anticipate the enemy's designs—we were bound to prevent the wealth and resources of the Dutch, the means of feeding their riches, from being transferred to the enemy by whom they were oppressed.

Reviewing then the circumstances and success of this war, with the events of former wars, even those to which the public may look with particular triumph, or individuals with a fond

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partiality, I cannot think that the present yields, in the importance of its success, to the most brilliant period of our history. I shall not compare it minutely with the glory of the Duke of Marlborough's war, nor with the glorious successes of the seven years war. Its advantages have been as extensive, as solid, and as important as any that ever were purchased by our armies. There is one point which I have omitted, and which the honourable gentleman nearly forgot altogether, and that is, the glorious success which has attended our arms in India, under the direction of a noble friend of mine*; successes which have increased and consolidated our empire in that quarter of the world. The honourable gentleman wishes to compare what has been done lately in India with former achievements there: it is impossible to make the comparison. The noble Marquis has performed every thing that could be done in the present moment. Will the honourable gentleman not admit, that the destruction of the power of Tippoo Saib was an event of the greatest and most important advatage to this country? Our conquests from Holland and Spain are to be laid out of the question, because they were our friends: but was Tippoo our friend? Was he forced by France into the war against us? Was he not in India, what France is in Europe, the inveterate enemy of the happiness, the power, and the independence of Great Britain? Was he not in alliance with France? Did he not act in concert with her in the Egyptian expedition, the importance of which he extols so much? — Away then with such sophistries! they cannot have the slightest effect upon any man who has been a witness to the events which have happened since the commencement of the war.

I have now, Sir, stated my view of the general subject of the war. But there is another point of view in which we must consider it, and in which it must make a deep impression upon us; we are not merely to consider what we have taken from France, but what we have preserved. The honourable gentleman says, we entered into the war to curb the power of France. Sir, there

* Marquis Wellesley.

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is no end to the various definitions which those gentlemen give of the object of the war: but we know why we entered into it; we entered into the war because the French would not let us be at peace. We entered into the war because the French would not let us remain in tranquillity, unless we consented to sacrifice the independence of Europe, and the happiness, the safety, and the honour of this country. In the course of the contest, we have had to contend with great difficulties foreign to the war. One of these difficulties was such an one as we now experience, I mean that of scarcity: we had the misfortune four times in the present war to experience unfavourable seasons. We have had besides, to contend with convulsions in the mercantile part of the public. This subject was discussed at the time when it happened, and it was then found not to have been in any material degree caused by the war. We have had, I admit, to contend against reverses and disasters; and I will venture to say, that those who lamented over them because they disappointed their hopes and wishes for the success of their country, and those who lamented over them for the purpose of depressing the public spirit, were equally unprepared for, and little expected, that extraordinary and unfortunate turn which the affairs of our allies took at the opening of the present campaign. But having to contend with all these events, we have had besides, and I am sorry I am obliged to admit it, to contend with an undue performance of stipulations by some of our allies; with a dereliction of their engagement by others; with a complete violation of the most solemn treaties by others (as in the case of Spain); and with an unaccountable and unforeseen change of conduct in others, from whose exertions, however, in some periods of the war, we have derived the greatest advantage—I allude, now, Sir, to the conduct of the court of Petersburgh. We have had, Sir, all these things to contend with; but can they, with any justice, be attributed as crimes to this country? And is it nothing that, in a contest into which we have been forced against our will, we have preserved our empire undiminished, maintained our constitution inviolate, and decreased, or,

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as the honourable gentleman thinks, destroyed that spirit of jacobinism which originated in, and has been supported by France? But this is not all: you have not only maintained your possessions entire, but have destroyed the maritime power, and taken the most valuable maritime possessions of your enemy; and in the course of all the changes and revolutions of surrounding nations, you have stood firm and even to the confederacy as you entered into it, and did not desert it in the hour of danger, or of peril, even while others were deserting you. Are these considerations nothing? Is it nothing that, having had to struggle, not for imaginary objects, but for our very existence as a free state, with our commerce marked out as an object of destruction, our constitution threatened, we have preserved the one unimpaired, and most materially augmented the other; and, in many particulars, increased our national wealth, as well as its glory? I say, it is thus the matter stands with regard to this country; and yet these are the topics, or at least some of the topics, on which the honourable gentleman chooses to say he has laid fair grounds before the house to call upon it to conclude with him (for so his motion would in its spirit indicate), that there is great misconduct in his Majesty's government.

The honourable gentleman has taken a general view of the affairs of this country; and I shall, without being too minute, endeavour to follow him over the outline of his observations. Some of them I need hardly touch upon, because they have been the subjects of repeated discussions in this house, in various stages of the present war. On all those points which were discussed before parliament, parliament have determined; and were I to argue them, I could only expect to tire the patience of the house with unnecessary repetition: I need therefore, with reference to many of the topics insisted upon so vehemently by the honourable gentleman to-night, only remind the house of what it has already done, presuming that it will not now think otherwise than it has thought already, where no fresh argument, nor any new circumstance has appeared to alter its opinion. Many of the observations, however, of the honour-

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able gentleman, although fallacious and inconsistent, I shall take notice of, not on account of their force, but of their extraordinary tendency. I hope the honourable gentleman used hasty words, such as may possibly escape a person in the heat of speaking, and that he himself considers the words that he used of that description — I mean the expression implying, "that he thought our honour was lost and our character degraded in the course of the present war, and that by the manner in which our army had been employed under the present administration." It will be seen, however, when the subject is inquired into—[hear! hear! from the other side]—The gentlemen opposite are anxious to seize on a word which is employed to signify discussed—when the matter then is discussed, it will be seen to whom the blame of it is imputable, or rather, it will be proved that there is not the least foundation for the charges which the honourable gentleman has advanced. An inquiry is demanded; but is it possible that the house could listen to motions of this kind every moment some persons thought proper to bring a vague and general charge of misconduct? It is enough, that, on general grounds of argument and presumption, it can be shewn that there is no necessity for supposing any thing wrong. It can never be the duty of this house to encourage such a disposition.

But the honourable gentleman is pleased to revive a phrase which was made use of by my right honourable friend*, who, with all the excellent qualities which belong to him, is more remarkable for the accuracy of his plans than for the measure of a sentence, and that the more especially when he happens to speak of what relates to his own conduct. He did not mean to say, that he wished to enter into a minute inquiry into every plan which he has been concerned in advising; he meant to profess, what he felt, a readiness to defend the measures of administration, if any one had a desire to object to any part of such measures: not that he thought it would be right that the time of the house should be taken up in discussing all the measures of administra-

* Mr. Dundas.

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tion, one by one, until the whole was examined; that would be an endless task, although I am confident it would be triumphant to my right honourable friend. He was ready then, and so he is now, to defend his Majesty's ministers in every measure adopted this war, provided somebody imputed any thing that was improper to us, and laid some ground which might call for an inquiry. I was therefore a little surprised to find such a construction put upon my right honourable friend's declaration as I have heard to-night, which was, that he wished from day to day to discuss all the measures of administration during the war. I should be glad to know what evidence it is of guilt for a man to deny a charge which is exhibited against him, and to argue upon the plain understanding of it, without any formal inquiry, which can never alter the facts that are obvious to all who see and hear? This is the common-place course with which loose charges of this kind are attempted, and have for the last hundred years been attempted to be supported upon these occasions; and they are generally maintained with a degree of vehemence in declamation, which is proportioned only to their weakness in point of reason. A loose, unconnected charge is made; and then, because those who are accused by it assign reasons why it should not occupy the time of the house, the party accused is immediately pronounced guilty.—I do not complain of this: the honourable gentleman has many precedents to plead in favour of this mode of argument, and I am not without some authorities on the part which I take in opposing him; neither is the honourable gentleman to take it for granted, that the public will think he is right, because he alleges that he is so; nor am I to expect a favourable sentiment in my behalf, on account of what I urge in vindication of ministers: the impartial part of the public will judge from the assertions of neither, but fairly on facts between both. Let it not be understood, that I admit there is any general rule to decide a question like this; all that the house can do now, is to consider whether they will say that what they have already done was wrong: that will be the case, if they go into a committee to inquire into what they have already determined; for that is the

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case in most of the points to which the honourable gentleman refers.

The honourable gentleman has alluded to former wars, not only as to the force employed in them, but also to the expense with which they were attended. In the first place, we should consider, that, as to the article of expense, that has been in a progressive state of advancement for the last forty years; it is found to be so in all the common and ordinary affairs of life, and therefore it would be an extraordinary thing if the expense of war, which consists in paying for articles of use in common life, were exempt from advancement more than other things are. The army and the navy are fed like other men, and most of the expenses of a military station are like other expenses, formed chiefly on common articles of consumption. But what is rather curious is, that the honourable gentleman says we have double the force we had in a former war to which he alluded, and yet he affects to be surprised at the expense being double, although, upon his own reasoning, the same force ought to be allowed double the expense. Such is the argument of the honourable gentleman, and that is what he calls a conclusive argument. The honourable gentleman thinks our present military establishment too much: and yet I have heard him, and those with whom he has been in the habit of acting, state with some animation, the prodigious exertions which France had made in the face of all the powers of Europe who opposed her. I have often considered those efforts of the French exaggerated pretty much in this house; but I always thought, and I have never attempted to disguise it, that France, from its very state, unfavourable as it was to any useful purpose, had advantages over others in the way of raising forces for the support of the war. The whole of their revolutionary policy was well adapted to this end; and now, although the objects which were pretended to be in view from that revolution are gone away, yet it possesses that strength in a considerable degree for the purpose of violent efforts. For the violent principle of taking, without regard either to justice or to policy, still remains in full force; they are still in a state

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to lay violent hands on any property they can find, for the purpose they want; and men they put in requisition wherever they are wanted. This has made me feel, and I have repeatedly said, that, in respect to sudden efforts to gain their object by force, they have an advantage over every legitimate government in Europe; and therefore it is not a matter of wonder that their exertions have sometimes surpassed any that were made under the reign of Louis the Fourteenth. But although this be the case, will any man tell me, that, because France has such means of making great exertions by violence, we, having to contend with such an enemy, are culpable because their violence is gigantic; and that it must be said that our affairs are ill-directed because we have not had twice the success we had in former wars, since we had twice the force we had in a former war? All this is insisted upon, as if the French force was not at all augmented; whereas the very arguments of the honourable gentleman, and indeed all others on the same side with him, have always had for their basis the tremendous force of the French. It is then asked, what have we done in the present war? I would answer, "You have given your enemy considerable annoyance, and might have done more, if others had adhered to the cause as you have done." There was a time when, if the combination had in all its parts been as true to its profession, and as steady to the general interest, as it is your glory to have been, you might have made, in conjunction altogether, a formidable attack in the interior of France—there was a time when, in my opinion, that might have been done; but it did not happen that the opportunity was seized as it might have been: what then? It will hardly be said that the fault of neglecting it is imputable to his Majesty's ministers. Why then, under these circumstances, and in this condition of things, I would ask, what other object had we to look to, but that of endeavouring to diminish the force of the enemy? I do not mean to dwell on this point now, because it is one which the honourable gentleman did not dwell upon in his opening, and I am unwilling to take up the time of the house in the discussion of matters which are not insisted upon as those which require to be

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discussed. But the honourable gentleman says, that so many thousand British troops went upon an expedition, and so many thousand British troops returned. Now, upon that point I have to observe, that if you have in view an object which you have reason to conceive you are competent to carry, which it is important for you to carry, which by good information you are led to believe you could carry, or upon a full view of which there is a chance of success, and that there appears no great risk, and yet you find upon trial you are not able to succeed in your point, but can nevertheless, after all, retire without loss, I want to know where the great blame is that ought to attach to you for such a proceeding, or wherein is the folly of your conduct? This is the utmost that can be said against any thing that we have undertaken; and this I am ready to maintain in the presence of any number of military men in Europe. It is not a point of military tactics, but of plain common sense; and I have mentioned this, because I could not avoid feeling a little on some of these points. As to the merit of any measures which may have been adopted by his Majesty's ministers, I feel it does not become me to say much: whatever that merit may be, a very large share of it falls to the lot of my right honourable friend*; but if there be any thing to blame, I have only to say, I will not admit that all the responsibility shall be exclusively cast on him. If there be any ground for criminality or for censure, I beg leave to say, that it must be divided among his Majesty's ministers, and that I am ready to take my share: and therefore the honourable gentleman will do well not to select my right honourable friend as an individual against whom to direct his objections. I wish the public to know, that it is not to one individual, but the whole of his Majesty's councils, that censure or applause should be given for any measure that may come before them to be judged.

The next point I shall take notice of, as brought forward by the honourable gentleman, is the state and condition of our allies. He has asked, what were our allies at one time, and what

* Mr. Dundas.

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they are now? I consider this as a very important point. He has said, that we set out with Spain and Holland for our allies, together with a favourable disposition towards us on the part of Russia, whose court had expressed a strong desire of a just conduct to be observed towards neutral nations, together with a determined hostility towards France. Prussia and France were engaged in war before we became parties in this contest. Prussia was ready to enter into an alliance with you when you were, I will not say led, but forced into the war. I will not dwell on the conduct of that power, but I would ask, in what part of the government of this country was there to be found any blame for the steps which were taken by Prussia upon the occasion? That power stopped short, and got out of the confederacy on a sudden; but how was that imputable to us? The honourable gentleman laid great stress on this: and asked, on whom we were to look as a perpetual ally? But if none of them are to be regarded, the fault is none of ours; we availed ourselves of their assistance while we could have it: if they have been less attentive to their own interest than we have been to them and the common cause, the blame is not with us; we did not, nor had we the means of entering into their speculations; our object was to preserve good faith, and we did so; and if any of them at any time wavered, the concern is theirs; as to the question of honour, ours is entire.—I would ask, whether any man now doubts of the propriety of our availing ourselves of the aid of Austria and Prussia while we could obtain it? As to Spain, I have said already what I think of the shameful dereliction of that court; but that power is n w in a condition that renders it very improbable that its hostility can be important to this country. In a word, as far as the question of alliance is applied to us, we have the satisfaction to feel that we have more than once rallied all the powers of Europe to make efforts in the common cause, to which we have contributed an ample share, and kept good faith inviolate. This is the real state of the case.

There is one objection which the honourable gentleman has stated to the conduct of his Majesty's ministers, and I admit, if

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there is any ground for it, they ought not only to be censured, but this house ought, without any delicacy, or apprehension for the present condition of things, to address his Majesty to dismiss them from his service at once; that is, that his Majesty's ministers form an obstacle to the attainment of a safe and honourable peace.—That we are to look for this, more from ourselves than from our allies, is unquestionably true; but what peace is it that we are to make? The honourable gentleman says, we have no security with regard to our allies; let us suppose, for the sake of the argument, that we have not; what then is to follow? That we are to try to obtain peace at all events? Shall we tell Buonaparte that we have no confidence in our allies, and that therefore we wish to treat with him for peace? I say, No! I say, if I had no confidence in our allies, I would not make that humble supplication for peace, I would at worst put forward the best resource of this country to maintain the contest until we should be able to obtain a safe and honourable peace; and I am persuaded that cringing for it is not the way to obtain an honourable peace. Having said this, I will add, by the way, that when gentlemen talk of peace, I cannot persuade myself they mean any but a safe and honourable one; and yet to bring forward into debate, in this house, topics which are calculated to impress upon ourselves at home, and our enemies abroad, an idea that we are distressed, and that we distrust our government, I cannot help thinking is a mode but ill adapted to the accomplishment of that object. It was indeed, if the house adopted this motion, the way to make the people distrust, and our enemies despise, our government. As to the conduct of our ally the emperor, I will repeat what I had occasion to state on a former night. I said, I had no idea, that, previous to the battle of Marengo, there was any intention on behalf of his Imperial Majesty to enter on a renewal of negociation with France, separately and distinctly. I did distinctly state, that at and from that period the First Consul of France made some proposals for that purpose; that, previous to the battle of Marengo, there was a proposal made to his Imperial Majesty, but that there was not any disposition shewn in the whole of that time, in the

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court of Vienna, to make a separate peace. I do declare that I believe we have the whole intelligence that belongs to that subject, nor have I the least distrust of the sincerity of his Imperial Majesty in refusing to enter into a separate negociation. Since that time we have assurances from the court of Vienna, of the most rigid adherence to the same principle of refusal to enter into a separate negociation, and to pursue the same plan as that on which that refusal was founded. I stated this the other night to come up to the 4th of November: I am able now to carry the same intelligence to a later period by a few days, that is, up to the 9th of November. I have no reason to distrust the sincerity of the professions of his Imperial Majesty, as conveyed by that intelligence. So stands that part of the case upon our alliance with Austria. But I know also, that great and extraordinary exertions have been made. I should add, that I will not make myself a guarantee for what may hereafter happen; I will not be answerable, for I cannot prophesy what new events may happen, or whether any or what over-ruling necessity may change either the conduct or the councils of the court of Vienna. I can only say, that as far as I have known, and I have no reason to distrust my information, the court of Vienna is hitherto explicit. If I should be disappointed in my expectation, I can only say I cannot help it; but hitherto I have no reason to think I shall. The question therefore is, what is prudent for us to do in the prosecution of this contest? I say, the wisest course we can take is to preserve the character that we have for honour and good faith, on which may yet depend the safety of Europe.

I should now come, in order, to the parenthesis of the honourable gentleman on the state of our constitution. But, first, for the sake of connexion on the subject of our allies, I will say a word or two respecting the Emperor of Russia. Concerning the embargo, to which the honourable gentleman has alluded, though I have received no information on the subject, I am disposed to believe the intelligence true; particularly as we know that not long ago a similar measure was adopted; an embargo was laid on and taken off in a few days—a circumstance by no means unlikely

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to take place on the present occasion. Whatever may have dictated this rash and precipitate step, this much I can say, that nothing on the conduct of this government ever gave any cause why the magnanimity of the Emperor Paul should so suddenly have been withdrawn from the confederacy, in which his co-operation must have been attended with so much benefit to Europe; and that no ground of difference has ever existed between the two governments in any points, upon which any variety of opinions can take place in this country.

And now I come to observe upon the state of our constitution, as it was alluded to by the honourable gentleman. It is a point on which I feel it would be improper for me to say much, for it has been discussed over and over again in this house. I contend that provisions have been adopted for the preservation of the constitution, which, but for such provisions, would have been destroyed, and the honourable gentleman would not to-night have been in this house to expatiate upon these topics, nor should I have been here to answer him. As to the influence of the crown, I will only say, that its increase is a topic often resorted to for the purposes of declamation; but I can hardly think that any man ever seriously regards it as matter for alarm; but even supposing it to be increasing, which I deny, there certainly is no necessity for going into a committee of the whole house to consider of the state of the nation; in order to consider of that subject, there is, if necessary, a much more compendious way of arriving at it.

The next point to which the honourable gentleman adverted, was that of the statement of finance and the internal state of the country, particularly the price of corn. As to the corn, I find the honourable gentleman wishes to inculcate this as an established principle, that the war is the principal cause of the high price of provisions, for which he stated three causes; the increase of the consumption, arising from waste partly of the army and navy; the increase of expense, from importation; and the influence that the issue of paper has occasioned, which has arisen from the stoppage of the Bank from payment in specie. These were the points,

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and the last was the principal one on which he dwelt. Now, upon each of these I shall make some general observations; but as I did on the first day of the session, so I shall at the present moment, avoid detail upon these topics, partly because a minuteness in general is dry and tedious, and partly because I speak in the hearing of many who have better judgments than I have, especially on the subject of paper money. The preliminary observations are, that there is waste in the consumption of the army and navy; there is great expence in importation from abroad; and there is a depreciation in the relative value of the circulating medium by the increase of the paper. First, I will observe, that all these causes are not peculiar to the present year; for, many of them have been stated to exist in as great, and some of them in a greater degree than they do at present. In the years 1798 and 1799, we had a greater number of military forces than we have at present; and as to the stoppage of the payment of the bank, that stoppage has taken place for some time, and the difference between the paper circulating medium of that time and the present is very inconsiderable. As to the taxes, which are supposed most to operate to raise the price of articles, there are none of them that bear hard upon the farmer, and can therefore have no immediate effect on the price of corn. None of these can have been the great cause of the high price of provisions, because, when these were at their height, provisions were infinitely cheaper than they are at present; nor can the war be the cause of the price, because the taxes have been felt as severely as they are now, (within about 400,000*l.* which was added last year,) and yet the high price of provisions was not known when all these causes operated.

Here Mr. Pitt took a view of the beneficial effects of the land-tax redemption bill, the operation of the sinking fund, and the policy of raising supplies within the year, as had been done by the assessed taxes and the income bill, which he considered indeed as a solid system of finance, but which he did not apprehend would become perpetual in time of peace, as the honourable gentleman had stated, for it was capable of modification as it now stood; and it would perhaps be prudent, after a given interval of peace, to relax its

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present exaction; it would otherwise in some respects change its character, being only a war tax: however, opportunities would occur hereafter to consider these topics. As to exchequer bills, he had to observe, that they ought not to be considered as currency, except such of them as were of short dates. It was much talked of, that the exchequer bills were a mass of paper which was injurious to the public; but this year they had been circulated at a premium, instead of a discount, which they usually were at; this, he contended, proved beyond dispute that the market was not, as the honourable gentleman contended, overstocked with a circulating medium, for if that were so, these bills could not possibly be at a premium, they must of necessity be at a discount: from these points the honourable gentleman had given a general state of the finance of the country. He did not conceive that this was a time for going into a minute detail upon this subject; and he thought the house would feel no difficulty in deciding that it was not necessary to go into a committee on the state of the nation, in order to inquire into these things; for many of them had already not only been discussed generally, but particularly, and very much in detail, in a committee of the whole house; various resolutions had been founded on them, and there had not been offered in this discussion any thing that ought to change the sentiments of the house upon the subject.

But the honourable gentleman had made one observation which merited particular attention: he had stated, by way of alternative, that either the present system must continue, and the bank payment in specie remain suspended (which he said would by-and-by ruin the country altogether), or else the bank should resume its payments in cash, and then it would be impossible to continue the contest. Now, this was a dilemna in which he hoped the house would never find this country. He hoped and trusted that we were neither reduced to the one nor the other of these two points, but that we should be able to continue that system by which we had hitherto avoided danger, and that we were far from being under any necessity of changing it: nor did he believe the house would adopt any such doctrine

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as this; they would, on the contrary, explode it, for the tendency of it was to proclaim to the enemy our inability to continue the contest, in which our existence as a free nation was at stake. A feeling was always ready to manifest itself on the consideration of this subject, which required no aid from the eloquence of any man; the bare statement of it was sufficient. In one word, the motion of the honourable gentleman contained a naked proposition, which was this — "Whether the house would now, without reason, abandon a proposition which they had so often, and with the best reason, adopted, and uniformly acted upon?" As to the calculation of the probable expense of continuing the war, he should not now go into it; he was of opinion that it could not be materially different from that which attended it the last year; nor was this any thing of a reason for going into a committee on the state of the nation.

I therefore submit, Mr. Pitt continued, that, upon the whole of what has been laid before the house to-night, I have said enough to satisfy it, that upon none of the grounds stated by the honourable gentleman is he justified in calling upon this house to institute an inquiry into the state of the nation; that much of what the honourable gentleman has stated to-night arises out of matter which has been discussed over and over again, and well decided; that his facts are misplaced; and that, as far as he proceeds on reasoning, his reasoning is fallacious: and therefore do I conclude, that there is no just ground laid before you for a committee to inquire into the state of the nation. That is the general ground of opposition which I state on the one hand:—on the other, I say that the internal state of the country requires your attention in a special manner to other topics, and that your time ought not to be consumed in unnecessary discussions upon points which lead to no practical conclusion; that you will have a committee up stairs, which will take due care of the most immediate interests of the country at this important crisis; that this motion leads to no immediate or remote advantage; that it may do mischief, by holding out encouragement to the enemy, and by causing a diffidence, if not

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despondency, in the people of this country, by teaching them to suspect that there is something in the state of the nation which is alarming — for which there is no foundation. For all these reasons I do give my decided opposition to this motion.

The motion was negatived;

Ayes 37
Noes 157

February 2, 1801.

DEBATE on the address of thanks to his Majesty for his most gracious Speech* on opening the session.

The address being moved by Sir Watkin Williams Wynne, and seconded by Mr. Cornwallis,

Mr. Grey proposed the following amendment:—

"And that this house will proceed with all possible dispatch to make such inquiries into the general state of the nation, but more especially into the conduct of the war, and into our relations with foreign powers, as may enable us to offer to his Majesty such advice as we may think most conducive to the honour of his crown, and the general interests of his people.

"And further, to assure his Majesty, that if, owing to any unjust and unreasonable pretensions on the part of the enemy, peace cannot be obtained on such terms as are consistent with security; if the representations which his Majesty has directed to be made to the court of Petersburgh, in consequence of the outrages committed against the ships, property, and persons of his subjects, have not received that reparation which the nature of the case requires; and if the differences which appear unhappily to have arisen between his Majesty and the other Northern Powers, are of a nature which presses for immediate decision; and the impossibility of any equitable adjustment renders new and more extended wars inevitable, we will give his Majesty every support which the means of the country can afford; in the just hope and confidence that his Majesty's paternal care for the welfare of his people will induce him to take such measures as shall prevent henceforward a calamitous waste of their remaining strength and resources, either by improvident and ineffectual projects, or by general negligence and profusion; and shall ensure a wise and vigorous administration of their affairs, under the unexampled difficulties in which they are now involved."

* See next page.

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Mr. PITT then rose:

Sir, in rising to make some observations upon what has fallen from the honourable gentleman †, I cannot avoid noticing a curious proposition which he advanced in the early part of his speech,

* "*My Lords and Gentlemen,*

"At a crisis so important to the interests of my people, I derive great satisfaction from being enabled, for the first time, to avail myself of the advice and assistance of the parliament of my United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

"This memorable æra, distinguished by the accomplishment of a measure calculated to augment and consolidate the strength and resources of the empire, and to cement more closely the interests and affections of my subjects, will, I trust, be equally marked by that vigour, energy, and firmness, which the circumstances of our present situation peculiarly require.

"The unfortunate course of events on the continent, and the consequences which must be expected to result from it, cannot fail to be matter of anxiety and concern to all who have a just feeling for the security and independence of Europe.

"Your astonishment, as well as your regret, must be excited by the conduct of those powers, whose attention, at such a period, appears to be more engaged in endeavours to weaken the naval force of the British empire, which has hitherto opposed so powerful an obstacle to the inordinate ambition of France, than in concerting the means of mutual defence against their common and increasing danger.

"The representations which I directed to be made to the court of Petersburgh, in consequence of the outrages committed against the ships, property, and persons of my subjects, have been treated with the utmost disrespect; and the proceedings of which I complained, have been aggravated by subsequent acts of injustice and violence.

"Under these circumstances, a convention has been concluded by that court with those of Copenhagen and Stockholm, the object of which, as avowed by one of the contracting parties, is to renew their former engagements for establishing, by force, a new code of maritime law, inconsistent with the rights and hostile to the interests of this country.

"In this situation, I could not hesitate as to the conduct which it became me to pursue. I have taken the earliest measures to repel the aggression of this hostile confederacy, and to support those principles which are essential to the maintenance of our naval strength, and which are grounded on the system of public laws, so long established and recognized in Europe.

† Mr. Grey.

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and which he repeated towards the conclusion of it, but with less confidence, viz. that the minority in this house, in point of fact, speak the sense of the majority of the people. Upon what ground the honourable gentleman has made that assertion, I am utterly incapable of guessing: but if it be true, every one of those great

"I have, at the same time, given such assurances as manifest my disposition to renew my ancient relations with those powers whenever it can be done consistently with the honour of my crown, and with a just regard to the safety of my subjects. You will, I am persuaded, omit nothing on your part that can afford me the most vigorous and effectual support in my firm determination to maintain, to the utmost, against every attack, the naval rights and the interests of my empire.

"*Gentlemen of the House of Commons,*

"I have directed the estimates for the several branches of the public service to be laid before you: deeply as I lament the continued necessity of adding to the burdens of my people, I am persuaded you will feel with me the importance of providing effectual means for those exertions which are indispensably requisite for the honour and security of the country.

"*My Lords and Gentlemen,*

"I am confident that your deliberations will be uniformly directed to the great object of improving the benefits of that happy Union, which, by the blessing of Providence, has now been effected; and of promoting, to the utmost, the prosperity of every part of my dominions.

"You will, I doubt not, resume the inquiries which were so diligently prosecuted in the last session of parliament, as to the best means of relieving my subjects from the pressure of the present high price of provisions; and of preventing, as far as it can be done by human foresight, the recurrence of similar difficulties. In these endeavours, and in every measure that can contribute to the happiness of my people, the great end of all my wishes, you may be assured of my cordial concurrence.

"You may rely on my availing myself of the earliest opportunity which shall afford a prospect of terminating the present contest, on grounds consistent with our security and honour, and with the maintenance of those essential rights on which our naval strength must always principally depend.

"It will afford me the truest and most heartfelt satisfaction, whenever the disposition of our enemies shall enable me thus to restore to the subjects of my United Kingdom the blessings of peace, and thereby confirm and augment those advantages which result from our internal situation, and which, even under all the difficulties of war, have carried to so great an extent the agriculture, manufactures, commerce, and revenue of the country."

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and honourable efforts by which, in the course of nine years, we have secured the independence and exalted the character of this country, which have enabled us to withstand the dangers and vicissitudes of this most arduous contest, which have afforded the means of security to Europe, at the same time that they have hitherto saved this country from the calamities which have visited almost all the rest of the globe—if, I say, the honourable gentleman's proposition be true, then all these noble efforts have been made for nine years, not only without the consent, but against the opinion of a majority of this house and of this country. Before the honourable gentleman can establish that proposition, he must convince the majority that they ought now to act in direct opposition to every principle upon which their conduct has hitherto been founded; and I confess I do not expect that he will succeed in such an attempt. I do not believe there are any among us who sat in this house in the last session of parliament, who do not recollect the discussions which took place upon every subject which the honourable gentleman has commented upon in his speech, (except one, which forms the more immediate question before the house, and to which I shall come by-and-by;) I do not believe, I say, that any of these gentlemen can lightly forget the opinions which they formed, and the principles upon which they acted. I do not believe, Sir, (being one of those who think as highly as my honourable friends who moved and seconded the motion for the address, of that important measure which has consolidated the strength of the empire,) that these honourable gentlemen whom we have this day, for the first time, the happiness of seeing among us, will disappoint the sanguine expectations that we formed of benefits to result from that important event. I am sure they have brought with them the same zeal, and the same principles which have supported us against an host of enemies. These gentlemen have had, in another place, the severe duty imposed upon them of contending with jacobinism on their own soil, and I am sure they would not wish to infuse that timidity into us, the least mixture of which would have been certain ruin to them. Whatever may be the confident language which the honourable gentleman may

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think proper to use upon this occasion, I cannot but believe that the present is a proper time for the discussion of that great and important question which is prepared for us by events, which we could not control, but which we must meet.

The honourable gentleman has, in the course of his speech, introduced several topics, which, he says, have been frequently discussed before, and which he expresses his hope will again be investigated. Upon both these grounds, I am not disposed to trouble the house at length, upon any of those subjects, at present. There is, indeed, but one new question before the house, I mean that which has been announced to us in his Majesty's most gracious speech from the throne, respecting our differences with the Northern powers. Sir, I must confess, that the manner in which the honourable gentleman has treated every part of this subject, has really filled me with astonishment, both when I consider the general plan of his speech, and the particular statements into which he went in support of his argument. The honourable gentleman thought it right, in the first place, to express his doubts of the justice of our claim with respect to neutral vessels; and in the next place (which appeared to me fully as singular) to question the importance of the point now at issue. But though the honourable gentleman seemed disposed to entertain doubts on points upon which I believe there is hardly another man to be found in this country who would hesitate for a moment, yet there were other points upon which his mind appeared to be free from doubt, and his opinions completely made up. If, after a full discussion of this question, it should appear that the claim which this country has made is founded on the clearest and most indisputable justice—if it should be proved that our greatness, nay, our very existence as a nation, and every thing that has raised us to the exalted situation which we hold, depends upon our possessing and exercising this—if, I say, all this should be proved in the most satisfactory manner, still the honourable gentleman is prepared seriously to declare in this house, that such are the circumstances in which we stand, that we ought publicly and explicitly to state to the world that we are unequal to the contest, and that we must

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quietly give up for ever an unquestionable right, and one upon which not only our character, but our very existence as a maritime power depends. This is the conduct which the honourable gentleman advises us to pursue at once, without determining, without investigating, whether it is compatible with our safety. I really find much difficulty, Sir, in reconciling this language to that sort of spirit which the honourable gentleman talks of in another part of his speech, in which he says, he is far from wishing to make the country despond.—[Mr. Grey here said across the table, that he had been misunderstood.]—Sir, I am stating what the honourable gentleman said, and I shall be happy to find that he did not mean what he said.

I shall now, Sir, endeavour to follow the honourable gentleman through his argument, as far as I can recollect it, upon the important question of the Northern confederacy. In following the order which he took, I must begin with his doubts, and end with his certainties; and I cannot avoid observing, that the honourable gentleman was singularly unfortunate upon this subject, for he entertained doubts where there was not the slightest ground for hesitation; and he contrives to make up his mind to absolute certainty, upon points in which both argument and fact are decidedly against him. That part of the question upon which the honourable gentleman appears to be involved in doubt, is with respect to the justice of our claim in regard to neutral vessels. In commenting upon this part of the subject, the honourable gentleman gave us a lesson in politics, which is more remarkable for its soundness than its novelty, viz. that a nation ought not to enforce a claim that is not founded in justice, and that nothing would be found to be consistent with true policy that was not conformable to strict justice. I thought, however, I heard the honourable gentleman in another part of his speech, where he was arguing the question of the expediency and propriety of our negociating a separate peace with France, contend that no consideration of good faith to Austria ought to prevent us from entering into such a negociation.—[Mr. Grey said, he had not laid that down as a principle, but merely with respect to the cir-

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cumstances under which we stood with regard to Austria.]—I am glad to hear the honourable gentleman contradict me, but I certainly understood him to say so. I am also glad to find, that when the issue of fact is found against him, he has no demurrer in reserve upon the principle. Upon the justice, however, of our claim, the honourable gentleman states himself to be wholly in doubt. There is, Sir, in general, a degree of modesty in doubting, that conciliates very much, and a man is seldom inclined to bear hard upon an antagonist whose attack does not exceed the limits of a doubt. But, Sir, when a gentleman doubts that which has been indisputably established for more than a century—when he doubts that which has been an acknowledged principle of law in all the tribunals of the kingdom, which are alone competent to decide upon the subject, and which parliament has constantly known them to act upon—when he doubts principles which the ablest and wisest statesmen have uniformly adopted—I say, Sir, the doubt that calls in question principles so established, without offering the slightest ground for so doing, shews a great deal of that pert presumption which, as often as modesty, leads to scepticism. I wish to ask every gentleman in the house whether it has not been always known that such was the principle upon which our courts were acting from the commencement of the present war up to the moment that I am speaking? I ask whether that principle has not been maintained in every war? Let me at the same time ask, whether, in the course of the speeches of the gentlemen on the other side of the house, any one topic of alarm has been omitted, which either fact could furnish or ingenuity supply? I believe I shall not be answered in the negative, and yet I believe I may safely assert, that it never occurred to any one member to increase the difficulties of the country by stating a doubt upon the question of right; and it will be a most singular circumstance, that the honourable gentleman and his friends should only have begun to doubt when our enemies are ready to begin to combat. But though I have heard doubts expressed upon a subject on which it appeared to me that a doubt could hardly have entered the mind of an Englishman, I

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have not heard one word to shew on what ground there can exist a doubt upon the justice of our claim—a claim which, until this house decides the contrary, I shall consider as part of the law of the land; for I consider the maritime law, and the law of nations, as acted upon in our courts, to be part of the law of the land. I speak in the presence of some learned gentlemen who are conversant in the practice of the courts to which I allude, and who, I am sure, will contradict me if I state that which is incorrect. I ask any of these learned gentlemen, whether they would suffer the principle upon which our claim rests, to be called in question in any of their courts? But when we come to consider this question as applying to the contest in which we may be engaged, there are so many considerations that are decisive upon the subject, that I am really convinced by the manner in which the honourable gentleman treated it, that his doubts have all arisen from his not having looked into the question.

There are two ways in which this subject is to be considered; the first is, what has been the general law of nations upon this subject, independent of any particular treaties which may have been made? The next is, how far any precise treaties affect it, with regard to the particular powers who are the objects of the present dispute? With respect to the law of nations, I know that the principle upon which we are now acting, and for which I am now contending, has been universally admitted and acted upon, except in cases where it has been restrained or modified by particular treaties between different states. And here I must observe, that the honourable gentleman has fallen into the same error which constitutes the great fallacy in the reasoning of the advocates for the Northern powers, namely, that every exception from the general law by a particular treaty, proves the law to be as it is stated in that treaty; whereas the very circumstance of making an exception by treaty, proves what the general law of nations would be, if no such treaty were made to modify or alter it. The honourable gentleman alludes to the treaty made between this country and France in the year 1787, known by the name of the Commercial treaty. In that treaty it certainly was

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stipulated, that in the event of Great Britain being engaged in a war, and France being neutral, she should have the advantage now claimed, and *vice versa;* but the honourable gentleman confesses that he recollects that the very same objection was made at that time, and was fully answered, and that it was clearly proved, that no part of our stipulation in that treaty tended to a dereliction of the principle for which we are now contending. Besides, when it is considered how far the interests of this country can be implicated in a naval war in which France is neutral, it will not afford any proof either that we considered the principle asunimportant, or that we gave it up. I could, without in the slightest degree weakening the cause which I am endeavouring to support, give to the honourable gentleman all the benefit he can possibly derive from the commercial treaty with France, and from particular treaties with other states, and I should be glad to know what advantage he could derive from such an admission. If he could shew treaties with any given number of states, still, if there were any state in Europe with whom no such treaty was in existence, with that state the law of nations, such as I am now contending for, must be in full force. Still more, it will be allowed to me, that if there is any nation that has forborne to be a party of these treaties, that maintained this principle and has enforced its rights; in such a case, no inference that can be drawn from treaties with other powers, can have any weight. The utmost the honourable gentleman could argue, and even in that I do not think he would be founded in justice, would be this—that, if there was no general consent with respect to the principles, particular treaties ought to serve as a guide in other cases. But what will the honourable gentleman say, if, instead of my stating an imaginary case, I give to him this short answer, that with every one of the three Northern powers with whom we are at present in dispute, independent of the law of nations, of our uniform practice, and of the opinions of our courts, we have the strict letter of engagements by which they are bound to us?—What will he say, if I shew, that their present conduct to us is as much a violation of positive treaties with us, as it is of the

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law of nations? With respect to Denmark and Sweden, nobody here, I am sure, has to learn that the treaties of 1661 and 1670 are now in full force, and nobody can read those treaties without seeing that the right carrying enemies' property is completely given up. With regard to Russia, the right of this country never was given by us. It undoubtedly was very much discussed during the time that the treaty of commerce with Russia was negociating; but I will not rest my argument upon negative evidence. In the convention signed between Great Britain and Russia at the commencement of the present war, the latter bound herself not merely to observe this principle by a convention, (not done away, unless we have unjustly commenced hostilities against her,) but she engaged to use her efforts to prevent neutral powers from protecting the commerce of France on the seas or in the ports of France. Laying aside then every other ground upon which I contend that the principle I am now maintaining is supported, still I say, that the treaties with these three powers, Russia, Sweden, and Denmark, are now in full force, and I ask, whether it is possible to suggest any one ground, upon which it can be contended that these powers are released from their engagements to us? So much for the justice of the claim.

I will not, Sir, take up much more of the time of the house, because there will be papers laid before the house, which will place the subject in a clearer point of view, than can be done in the course of a debate:—but I must say, that with regard to these powers the case does not stop here. What will the honourable gentleman say if I shew him, that in the course of the present war, both Denmark and Sweden have distinctly expressed their readiness to agree in that very principle, against which they are disposed to contend, and that they made acknowledgments to us for not carrying the claim so far as Russia was disposed to carry it? What will the honourable gentleman say, if I shew him that Sweden, who in the year 1780 agreed to the armed neutrality, has since then been at war herself, and then acted upon a principle directly contrary to that which she

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agreed to in the year 1780, and to that upon which she is now disposed to act? In the war between Sweden and Russia, the former distinctly acted upon that very principle for which we are now contending. What will the honourable gentleman say, if I shew him that in the last autumn, Denmark, with her fleets and arsenals at our mercy, entered into a solemn pledge not again to send vessels with convoy, until the principle was settled; and that, notwithstanding this solemn pledge, this state has entered into a new convention, similar to that which was agreed to in 1780? One of the engagements of that treaty is, that its stipulations are to be maintained by force of arms. Here then is a nation bound to us by treaty, and who has recently engaged not even to send a convoy until the point should be determined, that tells us she has entered into an engagement, by which she is bound to support that principle by force of arms. Is this, or is it not, war? Is it not that which, if we had not heard the honourable gentleman this night, would lead a man to think he insulted an Englishman by questioning his feelings upon the subject? But, Sir, when all these circumstances are accompanied by armaments, prepared at a period of the year when they think they have time for preparation without being exposed to our navy, his Majesty informs you, that these courts have avowed the principles of the treaty of 1780, known by the name of the Armed Neutrality; but then the honourable gentleman says, "we do not know the precise terms of the present treaty, and therefore we ought to take no steps until we are completely apprised of its contents." It is true, we do not know the exact terms of the treaty; but I should think if we demand to know, whether they have made engagements which we consider as hostile to our interests, and they tell us they have, but do not tell us what exceptions are made in our favour, we are not, I should think, bound to guess them, or to give them credit for them until they are shewn to us. How far would the honourable gentleman push his argument? Will he say, that we ought to wait quietly for the treaty, that we ought to take no step, until we have read it paragraph by paragraph, and

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that then we should acknowledge to those powers that we are now dispirited and not prepared to dispute the point? Does he mean that we should give them time to assemble all their forces and enable them to produce something like a substitute for the fallen navy of France? Is this the conduct which the honourable gentleman would recommend to the adoption of this country? Are we to wait till we see the article itself, until we see the seal to the contract of our destruction, before we take any means to insure our defence?

Sir, I will not trouble the house any longer upon the question of right, I come now to the question of expedience, and upon this part of the subject the honourable gentleman is not so much in doubt. The question is, whether we are to permit the navy of our enemy to be supplied and recruited—whether we are to suffer blockaded forts to be furnished with warlike stores and provisions —whether we are to suffer neutral nations, by hoisting a flag upon a sloop, or a fishing boat, to convey the treasures of South America to the harbours of Spain, or the naval stores of the Baltic to Brest or Toulon? Are these the propositions which gentlemen mean to contend for? I really have heard no argument upon the subject, yet. [Mr. Sheridan and Dr. Laurence entered the house together, and sat down upon the opposite bench.] I suppose I shall be answered by-and-by, as I see there is an accession of new members to the confederacy, who will, I have no doubt, add to the severity and to the length of the contest. I would ask, Sir, has there been any period since we have been a naval country, in which we have not acted upon this principle? The honourable gentleman talks of the destruction of the naval power of France; but does he really believe that her marine would have been decreased to the degree that it now is, if, during the whole of the war, this very principle had not been acted upon? and if the commerce of France had not been destroyed, does he believe that, if the fraudulent system of neutrals had not been prevented, her navy would not have been in a very different situation from that in which it now is? Does he not know that the naval preponderance, which we have by

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these means acquired, has given security to this country, and has more than once afforded chances for the salvation of Europe? In the wreck of the continent, and the disappointment of our hopes there, what has been the security of this country, but its naval preponderance?—and if that were once gone, the spirit of the country would go with it. If we had no other guide, if we had nothing else to look to but the experience of the present war, that alone proves, not the utility, but the necessity of maintaining a principle so important to the power, and even to the existence of this country.

There was something rather singular in the manner in which the honourable gentleman commented upon, and argued from, the destruction of the naval power of France; he says, her marine is now so much weakened, that we may now relinquish the means by which we have so nearly destroyed it; and, at the very same moment, he holds out the terrors of an invasion of Ireland. The honourable gentleman says, "We are not now, as we were in the year 1780, shrinking from the fleets of France and Spain in the channel:" but, if that was our only excuse for not asserting the principle in the year 1780, we have not now, happily for this country, the same reason for not persisting in our rights; and the question now is, whether, with increased proofs of the necessity of acting upon that principle, and with increased means of supporting it, we are for ever to give it up?

As to the necessity of making inquiries into charges which are to be exhibited against any part of the conduct of administration, and which are to be founded upon a review of their past conduct, it is announced by the honourable gentleman, that we are to have them laid before us. We shall have opportunity of discussing them abundantly; none of them touch the point which is now before us; for the amendment, as it stands, would only be embarrassed by reference to these topics. I think the amendment calculated to obstruct the proceedings of this country, on which its safety depends. Many other topics alluded to by the honourable gentleman are important, but they are so

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only in a secondary degree. I think the question of right in dispute between us and the confederated powers, so eminently important, that it claims, at this hour, the undivided attention of this house. As to what has been said on other topics, of the censures which ought to be cast on the counsel we have had any share in giving, for the prosecution of the war, I have the consolation of knowing what they are likely to be, from a recollection of what they have repeatedly been—that they will most probably be put in the same way, and will admit of being answered in the same way, as they have been already answered as often as they were brought forward, and I cannot help flattering myself with the same success. I hope also that the public will feel, as they have repeatedly felt, that the calamities which have overspread Europe, and which have affected, to a certain degree, this country, though much less than any other, have not been owing to any defect on our part, but that we have pursued principles best calculated for the welfare of human society, the nature and effect of which have been frequently commented upon by those who have opposed, and by those who have supported these principles, and with whom I had the honour to act, and still have the honour of acting; on which, I say, the power, the security, the honour of this nation has depended, and which, I trust, the perseverance and firmness of parliament and the nation will not cease to pursue, while his Majesty's servants discharge their duty.

Mr. Grey's amendment was negatived;

Ayes 63
Noes 245

And the address was then put and carried.

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March 12, 1801.

LORD CASTLEREAGH having moved, as a preliminary to another motion, of which he had given notice, respecting the necessity of continuing to enforce martial law in Ireland, "That the act for the suppression of the late rebellion in Ireland be read,"

Mr. Sheridan rose, and, after expressing his objections to the measure proposed, moved, "That the House do now adjourn."

MR. PITT:—

I feel that the debate in which we are now engaged, involves the whole merits of the proposal which my noble friend has announced his intention to submit, though by the singular use which the honourable gentleman opposite * has made of a mode of proceeding within the order of the house, we are nominally discussing his motion for adjournment. That course which the honourable gentleman has adopted, is the more extraordinary, as every thing that he said, every argument he adduced, would have applied as well after the proposition had been explained, as it did before my noble friend's motion was anticipated.

Before I proceed to the main question, however, I beg leave to take notice of an observation of the honourable gentleman †, on which he seemed to lay great stress, as he pronounced it with uncommon emphasis. The honourable gentleman appeared to be surprised at a remark of my noble friend, that the necessity which demanded a measure so unexampled as that which he was about to propose, was the effect of the malignant character of the jacobin principle. The honourable gentleman spoke of jacobins in power, and jacobins out of power, but he did not condescend to explain distinctly these allusions. He seemed indeed to point obscurely to some share which my noble friend had, at some period, taken in the question of parliamentary reform. Surely however, the honourable gentleman will not contend that there is not some distinction between the subject of parliamentary reform and jacobinical principles; surely, he

* Mr. Sheridan. † Mr. Grey.

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will not contend that there can be no situation in which a friend to parliamentary reform may be free from the taint of those doctrines, which have spread such confusion throughout Europe. If the honourable gentleman himself has supported the cause of parliamentary reform at a period when he had little support in the country, except from those who professed that object to conceal deeper and more dangerous views, he cannot find any suspicion of jacobinism in the conduct of him who maintained that cause at a period when it was connected with no such deceitful alloy, and threatened no such fatal consequences. I am not so uncharitable as to suppose that every man who is now a friend to parliamentary reform, must be a friend to jacobin principles; I only crave that the honourable gentleman would allow that indulgence to those, who embraced that cause at a time less liable to suspicion and misconstruction than that, in which some others have agitated the question. If those who brought it forward, connected as it is with the doctrines of the rights of man and the French revolution, when detected and exposed as the pretext of those who were engaged in a traitorous conspiracy in Ireland to overturn the government, and when some of its most zealous supporters here were suspected of similar machinations, could claim a fair construction of their motives, they cannot refuse the same charitable interpretation to those who have less occasion for the indulgence. If, however, the honourable gentleman is more studious to accuse himself than to acquit others in his views upon this subject, it is a very strange species of candour; the full credit of which I leave undisputed to the honourable gentleman.

Returning, however, from this digression to the principal question, I must presume that it seems presumptuous to attempt adding any thing to the able, perspicuous, and convincing speech, with which my noble friend opened the case—a speech which, I trust, will not merely be sufficient to satisfy the house of the vote which they ought to give to-night, but afford ground of congratulation, and on all questions connected with the affairs

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of Ireland, and indeed all other topics of deliberation, we shall h-ve h istance of the same talents in an enemy of jacobinism. I shall take the liberty to offer a few remarks on the answer which the honourable gentleman endeavoured to give to the arguments of my noble friend. The honourable gentleman observed, that my noble friend had said, that the measure was "unexampled," and yet, almost in the same breath, he complained that he had advanced no precedents in support of it! My honourable friend did say that the measure was unexampled; but how unexampled? It is indeed a measure unexampled in the necessity by which it is called for, and yet, I will assert, unexampled in the lenity by which it is distinguished. In former times, when it was found necessary to resort to martial law, the contests were soon decided in the field. They did not, on the present cause of its application, pervade every part of the machine of government, every artery of the social system; they did not enter into all the concerns of the community, poison all the comforts of private life, and all the sources of public security. The mischief and the danger came armed into the field; and, the battle won, the victors and the vanquished again enjoyed, though in different proportions, the comforts and the advantages of the social state. In this case, however, the danger is of another and more malignant species. Here, under the baneful influence of jacobinism, your enemies, although defeated in the field, only separate; the vital principle of enmity to order and social comfort still remains, confined, indeed, in scantier bounds, and with diminished means, though with undiminished rancour. The prerogative of exercising martial law, which was adequate to a sudden attack, and to a passing danger, is not equal to contend with a rebellion founded on principles so secret, so disseminated, so powerful, and so persevering. To obviate the defects of martial law, extended upon prerogative, it is necessary to improve and to enforce it by legislative provisions.

Having settled what is the description of the measure, it is asked, what is the call for it? To this we answer, that the pub-

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lic safety imperiously demands it; we contend that it is necessary for the defence of the government, for the safety of the lives and the property of his Majesty's faithful subjects. If we had trusted to the operation of martial law, introduced and maintained by prerogative alone, we should have established it in concurrence with the jurisdiction of the civil courts; or rather, in order to meet the designs of the desperate and disaffected, we should have been compelled to withdraw the benefits of the law from the whole of his Majesty's peaceable subjects in Ireland. Which course then is to be preferred? Shall the government renounce its guard and controul over the designs of the disaffected? Shall it give room for rebellion, contracted in its sphere and broken in its concert, to rally its courage and re-unite its scattered parts? Or shall we have recourse to that system of martial law which would deprive the unoffending of its protection? Or shall we not act more wisely in preferring a system which combines the benefits of law with the vigour of precaution; which obtains the safety of the state and leaves the ordinary administration of justice? Such a system, which does not in a single point overstep the immediate necessity; that leaves untouched every thing which it is safe to leave, amidst circumstances so critical and so difficult, deserves to be considered what I have characterised it—a system of unexampled lenity.

But, Sir, some gentlemen seem to suppose that nothing can be a rebellion but an army in the field, disputing the right to power in the constituted authorities. Let us examine this—Is it under any notion of either law or policy that this is to be so contended? Is it policy—is it justice—is it mercy to those who are loyal, to have this stand as the definition of rebellion? It will have the effect of putting on a level with the loyal all those who are not actually in the field in open rebellion. Civil tribunals, when they can be kept up to decide upon civil rights, are certainly superior to other tribunals, but it does not thence follow that all military tribunals are unnecessary; nor does it follow, that, because, generally speaking, they are inferior to civil tribunals, they are therefore of no use; it does not follow, because all the

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proceedings of the civil power are taken upon oath, that there is no such thing as an oath in the proceeding of the military courts. They do not proceed without oath to the judges, nor without oath of the accusing party, nor without oath of the witnesses; and therefore, although I admit the proceedings of a court-martial, in general cases, to be a less advantageous mode of administering justice than that of a civil tribunal, I cannot assent to the assertion, that courts-martial are totally destitute of form and system; and when the honourable baronet* asks me, as a person bred to the law, and therefore one from whom he expects to find a great attachment to that law, whether I do not prefer the civil to the military tribunal, I must be allowed to say that I have a sincere attachment to the laws of my country, but not more attachment than any other honest subject of the realm. In truth, although bred to the learned profession in a very early part of my life, I had but a short acquaintance with it—enough, however, to admire the excellence of it, but not enough to make me despise any other system which the necessities of a state may require. As a general proposition, I do not contend that a court-martial is a preferable mode of trial to that of the civil tribunal; but I say, that by a constant practice of this country, in the management of its public concerns, there have been occasions, and there always will be occasions, where the trial by a court-martial is preferable even to that of a trial by jury, because better adapted to the case to be tried. If this be not so, for what reason is it that we are, year after year, in the constant habit of passing the mutiny bill? Let it not be supposed that I wish the martial course of proceeding to be extended beyond its necessity, to the diminution of the civil power:—I only say it proves this, that parliament have considered what forms are best adapted to cases, instead of following one uniform course for them all; and even in ordinary times of peace and public tranquillity, it was considered that the martial law is better adapted to some cases than the civil authority. If parliament have been in the habit of adopting military law for the decision of some cases, what will they not do when the public

* Sir Lawrence Parsons.

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safety depends upon adopting such a system? When the first object is the public safety; and when civil process cannot be resorted to, or the ordinary mode of civil process cannot be carried on without this military aid, I ask, what is it that parliament will not assent to, for the purpose of accomplishing this system of protection? If this be so, will any man tell me, that retaining, as I do, an enthusiastic reverence for the trial by jury, it is not better to have a partial military law, for the preservation of the essence of that very trial, than, by clinging to the name of a trial by jury, lose both the spirit and the substance of it?

Sir, if we come to the question of law, I shall not presume to argue it; I have not been long enough in the profession to possess much knowledge of it; there are others in this house ready and competent to that task, if it be necessary to discuss it. But I would ask, whether any man will tell me that the crime of rebellion depends on five or six, or fifty, or five thousand men assembling together? I say, no; that is not the standard to which to refer the question of rebellion. If there be a systematic plan formed for the destruction of a country, and there is a concert of men, whether three or five, or any other number, to accomplish that end, whether by burglary, or robbery, or murder, or any species of criminality whatever, or, in furtherance of that plan, to deter the loyal and peaceable part of the community from being true to their allegiance, for the purpose of executing with more facility their martial law, as a system either of terror or otherwise, to rob triumphantly, or take away by stealth—whether it be "the pestilence that walketh in the darkness, or the sword that wasteth in the noon-day," if its character be rebellion, rebellion be it called;—if its effect be to defeat the purposes of civil process, whether by skulking with the dagger of the assassin in its hand, or by assuming the parade, the pomp, and the circumstance of, I will not say glorious, war, it is still rebellion. Whether flagitious, bold, and open, or sly, insinuating, and crafty—whether with much or with little bloodshed, may be points that may constitute a difference in the degree; but, which is most detestable,

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is athing not worth debating. What then is the question before us? Whether you will now take a qualified, restrained, limited, governed martial law, and preserve the great mass of the civil rights of the subjects in Ireland; or will hazard an opinion in which the whole may be thrown under the unqualified, unrestrained, unlimited, and ungovernable spirit and uncontrollable practice of martial law?—I say, that on such a question no honest intelligent man can possibly hesitate.

The honourable gentleman has alluded to the character of the noble Marquis, who is at the head of the executive power. Upon the merits of that great and illustrious personage, I feel more than I am able to express; but I have the satisfaction of knowing that my sentiments are in unison with those of every friend to real virtue and enlightened patriotism, in admiration of the noble Marquis. My noble friend has produced the authority of that high and respected character, as evidence of the necessity of martial law, in the situation of Ireland. Lord Cornwallis, since the rebellion, has issued many warrants for holding such courts; even these courts have tried and condemned persons for various offences. They have tried and convicted men, not merely of offences constructively amounting to what is called furtherance of rebellion, but of the crimes of murder and rebellion. But the honourable gentleman says, a court martial may judge ill; and he gives you a solitary instance as a proof of this. Why, Sir, so he may of the conduct of a jury: but what would be said to me, if, after giving an instance in which a jury had convicted where they ought to have acquitted, or had acquitted where they ought to have convicted, I were from thence to conclude that the trial by jury is an evil, and that you ought to have no more of it? I believe I should not have many supporters in this house, or in this country; and yet the honourable gentleman's instance of the mistake made by one court-martial, amounts to no more than that which I have stated.

But it is said that the courts of law are open! True; the courts of law have been open; the judges have been enabled to hold their assizes, because the wise and benevolent measures

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that have been pursued, because the very measure now in discussion, afforded that protection and security which justice could not otherwise have obtained. It is owing to their salutary precautions that civil process has been preserved to the peaceable. If, amidst such perilous circumstances, the laws have maintained their course as in time of peace; if individuals have been protected, and the constitution of the state defended, it is by a continuance of the same vigorous, but tempered system, that Ireland can be maintained in the enjoyment of tranquillity, and secured from a recurrence of those disastrous scenes, of which the calamities must be fresh in every man's recollection.

The motion of adjournment was negatived, and Lord Castlereagh's motion passed without a division *.

* On the 14th of March Mr. Pitt resigned the offices of First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer; and other changes in the ministerial departments at the same time took place. The new Administration consisted of,

Right Hon. Henry Addington	First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer.
Duke of Portland	President of the Council.
Lord Eldon	Lord Chancellor.
Earl of Westmoreland	Lord Privy Seal.
Earl St. Vincent	First Lord of the Admiralty.
Earl of Chatham	Master-General of the Ordnance.
Lord Pelham	Secretary of State for the Home Department.
Lord Hawkesbury	Do. for Foreign Affairs.
Lord Hobart	Do. for the Department of War and the Colonies.
Lord Viscount Lewisham (now Earl of Dartmouth) succeeded by Lord Castlereagh	President of the Board of Controul for the Affairs of India.
Right Hon. Charles Yorke	Secretary at War.
Earl of Liverpool	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.
Right Hon. Dudley Ryder (now Lord Harrowby)	Treasurer of the Navy.
Right Hon. Thomas Steele Lord Glenbervie	Joint Paymasters of his Majesty's Forces.

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March 25, 1801.

ON a motion by Mr. Grey, for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House, to inquire into the State of the Nation,

Mr. PITT said,

That after what the house had heard from his right honourable friend*, and much as he was interested in the question, and in some of the topics which were opened by the honourable gentleman whose motion was now before the house, he should have felt that he had but little excuse for troubling the house much at large upon the present subject, if the debate had not, from a few words which fell from another honourable gentleman, taken a turn totally different from that which was introduced by the honourable mover. The principal part of the time which he employed in the discussion was consumed in endeavouring to satisfy the house, that, as he now suspected some gentlemen had improperly resigned their situations under government, that was sufficient to induce the house to go into an inquiry into the state of the nation. If it had not been for some observations that were made upon those resignations, and he had been aware that no gentleman would give his vote this

Lord Auckland	Joint Postmasters-General.	
Lord Charles Spencer		
John Hiley Addington, Esq.	Secretaries of the Treasury.	
Nicholas Vansittart, Esq.		
Sir William Grant	Master of the Rolls.	
Sir Edward Law (now Lord Ellenborough)	Attorney-General.	
Hon. Spencer Perceval	Solicitor-General.	
Earl of Hardwicke	Lord Lieutenant	of Ireland.
Earl of Clare	Lord Chancellor	
Lord Castlereagh, succeeded by Right Hon. W. Wickham	Chief Secretary	
Right Hon. Isaac Corry	Chancellor of Exchequer	

* Mr. Dundas.

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night upon any but a consideration of this simple question: — "Do the arguments this night alter the principles on which you yourselves have acted for nearly nine years?"—if, he said, it had not been for some observations which were independent of that question, simply so stated, he should have felt it hardly necessary for him to have troubled the house at all, but to pass by in silence, and refer to the judgment of the house, every thing which related to his own personal conduct. He hoped that this language would not be mistaken for indifference in him as to the opinion of the house, or of the country; for a contempt for either he had no wish to express. He pretended to no such philosophy as that which led to the species of indifference as to the opinion of others, which some persons chose to affect; nor was he indifferent to the circumstances of this country, nor to the opinion which the public might entertain of the share, the too large share, he had taken in them: on the contrary, he confessed, that these topics occupied his attention much, for events had happened which disappointed his warmest wishes, and frustrated the most favourite hopes of his heart; and he could have desired to have continued to pursue the objects of such hopes and wishes to the end of that struggle, which he had worked for with anxiety and care. There never was a period in his life, in which these topics were indifferent to him. Much less could he be indifferent to the good opinion of those who had been induced, on so many occasions, to shew so much confidence in him — a confidence, however, which had always been constitutionally given, and to which he begged leave to say, every servant of the crown was entitled, until forfeited by his conduct. Neither was he indifferent to the many marked instances he had observed of the personal confidence in him, upon various occasions, and which he could not flatter himself with having merited.

Much, however, as he felt these sentiments, there were others which he felt still more strongly; and therefore he was under the necessity of submitting some ideas upon the subject before the house. This was not a question solely applicable to him-

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self or to his colleagues; for if it were, however dear the topics of such a case might be to him, he should have been induced to give the house but little trouble on that account. No, this was a question which involved the honour of that house, and the character of the nation; the honour of the one, and the constitutional freedom of the other. This motion taken in that view of the subject, he would put to the house this question:—Whether it was prepared to retract all that it had declared and done for the last nine most eventful years, and had changed its mind on the nature of that struggle in which we had for that period been engaged, and in which, not only so large a majority of that house had been so firm, but, as he had on a former occasion taken the liberty of expressing it, a greater majority of the people had supported uniformly and steadily, and which they had considered as nothing less than a contest for independence with the enemy abroad, and for a constitutional safety with the enemy at home? He believed, therefore, that the house would conceive its honour to be implicated in the question now before it, as well as the honour, and, in a considerable degree, the safety of the country. On these points, the decision of the house, and the judgment of the public, had been uniform and steady. If ever the moment should arrive, in which, under whatever mask, the attempt should be made, to induce the house to forget the principles by which it had been so long guided—if ever the moment should arrive, in which the principles of those should prevail who had, by their arguments, supported the enemy, the counsels of those who had so often embarrassed our proceedings, and checked our efforts—counsels, which led to the surrender of our independence and constitutional freedom, instead of the counsels which tended to the preservation of both—if ever the moment should arrive, when the house, being told they should tread back their steps to avoid a general havoc over all Europe, instead of pursuing such steps uniformly and steadily should adopt the advice—if ever the moment should arrive, when the house would listen to and follow such counsels, he should then indeed begin to think that

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there was some ground for the prediction which had been uttered of the downfall of this empire: but, thank God! there was no appearance of any such downfall, because there was no probability that the advice and counsel he had just alluded to, was to be taken as a remedy for any evil which was alleged to afflict us.

He therefore spoke with less apprehension of danger than he should do if these things were doubtful, upon the motion of the honourable gentleman, and with the less anxiety as to many parts of that gentleman's speech, when he reflected on the manner in which it had been answered by his right honourable friend; indeed, he thought he perceived something which conveyed an idea, that the honourable gentleman opposite to him, did not entertain any very sanguine hope that they would be able to prevail on the house to assent to the motion now before it; they did not seem to think they had laid before it materials to call upon it to retract all it had hitherto asserted, or reverse all it had hitherto done in the course of the present war. This consideration, therefore, supposing he felt no other, would have induced him to remain silent on this debate; but he felt a mixed sensation, from what had fallen from an honourable gentleman, and from a noble lord*, with whom he had the honour of being connected in kindred, as he had hitherto been in political sentiments. He felt grateful for the unmerited expressions of good opinion which his noble kinsman, and those with whom he was most immediately connected, had directed towards him; but he must confess, he should have been better pleased, both as a public man, and a private individual, if he had heard sentiments that were less favourable to himself, and more favourable to others, who were now in his Majesty's service; and if he felt any other than such wishes, he apprehended he should have been unworthy of the good opinion which the noble lord had been pleased to express of him. Nor could he help saying, that those who, like the noble lord, were to vote for this motion, were, without intending it, adopting a course the most unfair, the most un-

* Lord Temple.

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kind, towards those to whom they professed friendship, that they possibly could pursue; and at the same time, a course that would be the most mischievous with regard to the interests of the public.

Now, as to the word *unfair*, which he perceived had an effect on some gentlemen on the other side, which he did not intend to produce, he meant nothing uncivil to these gentlemen; but the house should judge whether his ideas were just or not. There were two sets of gentlemen who were desired to vote on precisely the same question, on two grounds, that were not only distinct, but opposite. Of this he thought himself entitled to complain. He thought he had some reason to complain, that his opponent was to have the benefit of the votes of some of the friends of the late administration, while he who was one of such administration, had only the benefit of a speech from his friends; thus his noble relation expressed in him the fullest confidence, and yet pursued him to condemnation, because he did not choose to confide in those of his Majesty's servants who were now in office.

In the next place, he hoped he might be permitted to observe, that there was no point which had been more disputed in that house, (although the thing itself never appeared to him to be difficult,) than that of confidence in his Majesty's ministers. But the case was not to stop here. The question of confidence had nothing about it that was new. It attended the outset of his administration, and it had not deserted the close of it. In the outset of his administration, he understood it to be held by some people, that no person was entitled to common and ordinary confidence, until he had given proof of having deserved it. It never could be carried in substance to the length it here went in the letter; for it was impossible to say that a man should not have any confidence in a situation, because it was new to him, for that must be made applicable for every human creature; whenever he entered at first upon any employment, he must at some time or other be new in his employment: it was not therefore, at that time, judged that he should have no confidence

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personally, (for certainly that was not claimed for him,) but it was said, that he came into administration with sentiments opposite to those which had been held by men who preceded him in office, and who had enjoyed the confidence of the house, (he meant the sentiments of the honourable gentleman opposite to him*,) and the question was then, whether he, who was then said to hold sentiments different from those which were said to have the confidence of the house, should have any of that confidence placed in him; that was the way in which the point was put then. But the way in which it was put now was absolutely whimsical: for it was now stated, "Here is a ministry who have had the full confidence of the house of commons;" — words which he did not presume to utter for himself, but which, for the purposes of this debate, were uttered by others for him—and gentlemen had said, that within a few hours of his departure there was an appearance of stability in his Majesty's government. But what was the complaint now? Not that the persons who now claimed the support of the house differed from those who had received that support, as he was stated to have done in 1783, (how correctly that was stated was another question,) but that those who now claimed the confidence of the house, ought not to have it, because they professed the same principles as those who have so long possessed that confidence. The reason for this was a very curious one; it was stated by certain gentlemen to be that of their not knowing why his Majesty's late ministers had retired: — so that confidence was to be withheld from his Majesty's present servants till gentlemen knew why their predecessors went out of office, and till the new ones were known. He did not see why gentlemen were to withhold their confidence from his Majesty's present ministers, because they did not know why their predecessors retired; he did not know why gentlemen wanted any more information on that subject than they possessed already. They knew almost all they should know, and, he believed, all they would know upon that subject. But here the public were to be

* Mr. Fox.

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deprived of the services of those who had been chosen by the crown, merely because there was, about the retirement of their predecessors, something which these gentlemen said they did not understand; and because the house did not know how the new ministers would act. He understood that they were persons who would act on their own judgment, as they ought to do in each particular, but that their general principles were the same; and then it came to this—that the supporters of the present motion said the house ought to withhold its confidence from the present ministers, not because they were the reverse, but because they were the same in principle with those in whom the house had confided.

But he would not stop here. If the house considered the points on which it usually afforded its confidence, it would find every reason for affording it to the present ministers. It was said, that ministers should be men known to the house of commons before the house confided in them. Be it so.—That could not be made applicable to the situation to which they were at any time to be appointed, because that would go to the exclusion of confidence in any man whenever he came into a new situation. There could be no experience of him in that situation until he was tried. But when persons were tried in one situation, and had acquitted themselves well, the rule was to give them credit that they would do so in any other situation, until proof of something to the contrary appeared. If this was not correct doctrine, he was very much deceived. He should like to know on what principle it was, that the propriety of supporting them should be questioned until they had shewn by their actions that they did not deserve to be supported. Were these gentlemen called to a situation that was new to them? Yes; but were they new to the public? Not so; for they were not only not new to the house and the public, but they were not new to the love and esteem of the house and the public, and that from sufficient experience as to their principles and talents. —One of them was a gentleman who was admired in private, as well as respected and esteemed in public, who had been long

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chosen into the situation of the first commoner in this country, and had lately been unanimously re-elected to that high station*. Was this the person of whom the house of commons were to say, they would not confide in him, because, at a moment of difficulty, (dissembled by none, but exaggerated by some persons who loved to dwell on any topic which gave any thing of a gloom to our affairs,) he quitted a situation of the highest authority that a representative of the people could possess, for one of greater trouble and perplexity, and at a moment when honourable gentlemen were holding out the difficulties of the situation to be insuperable? To refuse confidence to such a person in such a situation, appeared to him to be repugnant to common sense and to common justice; and he could not help saying, that he was astonished at what his noble friend† and the honourable baronet‡ had said that night on some parts of this subject.

Again he would say, that if he saw a noble lord§ called to the situation of a secretary of state, he was ready to ask, without the fear of receiving any answer that would disappoint him, whether gentlemen on the other side knew any man, who was superior to that noble lord; who for the last ten years had more experience of state affairs, and who had given greater proof of steady attention to public business; of a better understanding; of more information; who possessed in a greater degree all those qualities which go to qualify a man for great affairs? He was ready to ask gentlemen on the other side, if they knew any one among themselves who was superior to his noble friend? Let them give him the answer. He should like to take the opinions of the different individuals on the other side, if it were not a painful thing to put it to their modesty, whether any one among them, except one honourable gentleman‖ whose attendance was of late so rare that he might almost be considered as a *new* member—whose transcendant talents, indeed, made him an exception to almost any rule in every thing that required uncommon powers, but whose conduct was also what ought,

* Mr. Addington. † Lord Temple. ‡ Sir Wm. Young.
§ Lord Hawkesbury. ‖ Mr. Fox.

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generally speaking, to be an exception also, to the rules which ought to guide the affairs of this country; which conduct had been at variance in some respects from that of almost every other public man, and which, if followed, must have been highly injurious to the true interest of this country—he repeated it, he knew of no one on the opposite side of the house (except the honourable gentleman he had alluded to, whose experience was as great as his faculties were transcendant,) that was more than equal to his noble friend in capacity for business. He did not mean to offer any incivility to gentlemen on the other side; but he did not think that he had offered either of them any disparagement whatever, when he said, that neither of them was more than equal to his noble friend.

Was it necessary for him to say much of the faculties and fitness, in every particular, of a certain noble lord* who was likely soon to have the custody of the great seal? He was, surely, not new to this country, whose character for legal knowledge, for integrity, and for a cluster of those qualities which fit him for that high office, had been long acknowledged. There was no pledge necessary on behalf of such a character.

Of other individuals of the new administration, he could say much; but if he were to indulge his feelings upon this topic, he should be in danger of wearying the house. There was, however, one character of whom he could not forbear speaking.—It would occur to the house, that it was not an easy thing to supply the place of the late first lord of the admiralty, Earl Spencer; and yet, he should think, that the name of Earl St. Vincent would appear in a satisfactory light to the house, even as the successor of the noble earl, or of any other man known to this country; and that the more especially in a period of war, which called for all the exertion of the executive government. Was this appointment not such as to support the hope of this country, that it would come soon to the termination of a contest which we had conducted near to a conclusion—["Hear! Hear!" from the other side.]—which he trusted we had conducted near to a conclusion. But

* Lord Eldon.

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whether the contest was yet to be long or short, until the object of it were secured, he hoped the spirit of the country would not be impaired, nor in any degree slackened, but exerted with vigour towards bringing it to a termination; or, if we were still to struggle with continued difficulties, he would ask, was not the name of that noble earl a shield and bulwark to the nation? He would therefore say, that gentlemen spoke with but little reflection, or even consideration, when they said the present administration were not entitled to the confidence of that house, or of the public—he meant, of course, no more than a constitutional confidence. All he contended for was, that unless some good reason were assigned to the contrary, the house was bound, by the best principles of policy, as well as by the true spirit of the constitution of this country, to wait to see the conduct of the ministers of the crown, before they should withhold their confidence. On this subject of confidence, let not gentlemen suppose that a committee on the state of the nation could be of the least use, because nothing that could be there disclosed could give the house more information than the house possessed already on that matter; nor could any thing be done in that committee that could alter the present posture of the executive government, unless the committee should pass a resolution to withdraw its confidence from the present ministers of the crown, and to give it to their opponent* and his friends, in order to make them successors to them; which would be a pretty strong measure, and border on an encroachment on the prerogative, besides introducing principles the very reverse of those, which had hitherto invariably had the sanction of parliament. He did not mean to use any opprobrious epithets towards gentlemen on the other side; but he certainly did not say more than was warranted by fact, when he said, that by the constant course of the determination of parliament, the principles of these gentlemen had been reprobated.

Having said this, he would now utter a word or two for his colleagues, and for himself. With regard to their quitting their

* Mr. Fox.

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offices, he did not see any mystery about that subject, and he thought he was entitled to rely on the candour of gentlemen on the other side for believing the sincerity of their declarations on the occasion. The honourable gentleman * who spoke first, was pleased to say, he would allow that, in case of a public measure of importance which a minister found he could not propose with success, or that he was not able to propose as a measure which was assuredly to receive the assistance of those who compose the executive government, and that such a measure a minister could not conscientiously give up or abandon—that such a condition of things would be sufficient to excuse a minister for retiring, and would, indeed, give a minister a right to retire. Now, after that allowance of the honourable gentleman, it was matter of astonishment to him that any doubt could have been entertained by that honourable gentleman on that part of the subject, or that he did not at once admit, that the circumstance which had been sufficiently explained already, had amounted, in the opinion of that honourable gentleman, to a complete justification of himself and others who had retired. He admitted, however, to the honourable gentleman, that if a person who filled an office of important trust under government, had formed the project of proposing some measure which did not appear to him to be of much public importance, although he had made up his mind upon it, but which he could not carry into effect, seeing clearly that the bent of the government of which he made a part was against him, then it was the duty of such a minister to forego that opinion, and to sacrifice rather than withdraw his assistance from government in the hour of peril.

Mr. Pitt said, it was extremely painful to him to be obliged to say so much, and so long to occupy the attention of the house; but he would observe, that he had lived to very little purpose for the last seventeen years of his life, if it was necessary for him to say, that he had not quitted his situation in order to shrink from its difficulties; for, in the whole of that time, he had acted, whether well or ill, it was not for him to say, but certainly in a

* Mr. Grey.

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manner that had no resemblance to shrinking from difficulty. He might say this, if he were to strike the seventeen years out of the account, and refer only to what had taken place within the last two months; and he would venture to allege, that enough had happened within that time to wipe off the idea of his being disposed to shrink from difficulty, or wishing to get rid of any responsibility. What had happened within that period had afforded him an opportunity of shewing, in a particular manner, that he was willing to be responsible to any extent which his situation cast upon him: in that particular he had had the good fortune, however unfortunate the cause, to have shewn that he was not only a party, but that he was the deepest of all parties in responsibility, in the adoption of a measure the most critical with regard to himself and his colleagues. He was therefore led to say, as to the measure which had induced him to quit his situation, that he did believe the importance of it, and the circumstances by which it was attended, to be such, that while he remained in office he should have been unable to bring it forward in the way, which was likely to be eventually successful; and therefore he judged that he should serve less beneficially the public, as well as the parties more immediately the objects of it, in making the attempt, than in desisting from the measure. His idea of the measure itself was, that it was one which upon the whole had been better adopted than refused under all the circumstances: such was also the idea of those who had acted with him, and they had therefore thought it better that they should quit their offices, than continue under such circumstances in his Majesty's service. In doing this, they had acted purely from principle; they had acted in such a manner as had satisfied their own minds, which was to them important; and he hoped they had acted in such a manner as would, one day or other, be perfectly satisfactory to the public, so far as the public should ever think it worth their while to be concerned in his conduct.

The measure to which he alluded, had he proposed it, as at one time he wished, was not one which gentlemen on the other side of the house were likely to look on lightly, although he should

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have had the good fortune to have their support if he had brought it forward, that is, on one part; but he did not think that he should upon the whole of it, nor did he believe those gentlemen would have favoured the whole of the principle on which he should have proposed the measure. He was not anxious to have the question agitated at all at this moment. I do not think, said Mr. Pitt, that this is a period in which it can be agitated beneficially to the public, or even to those who are more immediately the objects of it, and who are supposed to be so interested in its success; but whenever it is agitated, I shall be ready and I shall be willing to go fully into it, and to give at large my opinion on it. I will say only at present, that as to any thing which I and my colleagues meditated to bring forward, I disclaim the very words in common use, "the emancipation of the catholics," or, "catholic emancipation." I have never understood that subject so,—I never understood the situation of the catholics to be such—I do not now understand the situation of the catholics to be such as that any relief from it could be correctly so described; but I think the few remaining benefits of which they have not yet participated, might have been added safely to the many benefits which have been so bounteously conferred on them in the course of the present reign. I was of opinion, and I am still of opinion, that these benefits, if they had gone before the union, would have been rash and destructive. I was of opinion then,—I am of opinion now, that the very measure I allude to, as a claim of right cannot be maintained; and it is on the ground of liberality alone, and political expedience (and in that sense wisdom, as connected with other measures), that I should have thought it desirable, adviseable, and important: but I would not have had it founded on a naked proposition, to repeal any one thing which former policy had deemed expedient for the safety of the church and state. No, Sir, it was a comprehensive and an extensive system which I intended to propose—to relinquish things certainly intended once as a security, which I thought in some respect ineffectual, and which were liable to additional objections, from the very circumstance of the object of the union having been accomplished, and

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getting other security for the same objects, to have a more consistent and rational security both in church and state, according to the principle, but varying the mode, which the wisdom of our ancestors had adopted to prevent danger. The measure I intended to propose, I think, would give more safety to the church and state, as well as more satisfaction to all classes and all descriptions of the king's subjects, to take away that which no man would wish to remain, provided there could be perfect security without it. The house will, I am sure, forgive me for this part of my address to it.

As to what might be the nature of the measure, I am sure the house will in a moment feel that what I am going to allege will satisfy it, that nothing of this nature could ever be accomplished by having a committee of the whole house on the state of the nation; for, independent of the many things which would be necessary to be done, if such a measure were set on foot, there is one thing which will make it obvious how inefficient for such a purpose a committee on the state of the nation would be. In the first place, that committee would not have any power whatever to interrogate any one member of parliament; and therefore all that part of the speech of the honourable gentleman which tended to connect the committee on the state of the natoin with the condition of the catholics in Ireland, although it might serve the purpose of engaging men's affections for a moment, had, in reality, nothing whatever to do with it; and gentlemen are not such novices in the affairs of parliament, as not to know that they may, whenever they please, move this or any other subject, independent of any other consideration, and that there is no necessity for a committee to inquire into the state of the nation for that purpose. I think, however, that the question with regard to the condition of the catholics, according to my view of things, cannot be improved by a committee on the state of the nation being brought forward at this time. It will cast no light whatever on any one subject connected with the catholic question. I am absolutely certain, as little can it throw on the cause, or the propriety or impropriety of our resignation:—this is too obvious to

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require any argument. How can the committee proceed to the examination of the cause of the resignation of his Majesty's ministers, to which some gentlemen, for purposes, perhaps, not very doubtful, have been pleased to attach so much importance? I know of no right which the house of commons itself, still less a committee, can have to require of any man to state his reasons for tendering his resignation to his sovereign; nor is it a common thing for the public to require it. A man very often, indeed, makes his appeal to the public on going out of office, and that sometimes as much with a wish to be re-instated as any thing; but I never heard of a man being called on to exculpate himself from the charge of resigning. But gentlemen say, that, by our being silent on the subject of the catholic question, we have brought the name of our sovereign into disrepute; and the honourable gentleman chooses to put a construction on our remaining silent, and then to ask a question, whether the catholics had or had not been deceived. And upon the obstacles to the measure, as they are stated in a paper, of which I shall take notice shortly, the honourable gentleman says, that *innumerable* obstacles are in the way of the measure. I do not know what paper he took up; I cannot be responsible for it; nor, indeed, for the verbal accuracy of any paper whatever. I believe the word which the honourable gentleman has alluded to was really *insuperable*, and not *innumerable*. Upon that subject, all I will say is this:—That although I wished to submit the question of the catholics to parliament, there were such objections stated as made me feel it impossible, with propriety, to bring the measure forward as a minister. These are the general words I choose to use upon the subject: the honourable gentleman shall draw from me no admissions, and no denials on this subject. He may argue as he pleases from the words I use. ["Hear! Hear!" from the other side.] Gentlemen may draw what inference they please.

But I shall say a few words more upon this subject. Gentlemen say, that I left this case in a state in which the name of the sovereign is brought into question; and they appear to be angry, because I will not tell them whether they ought to be angry or

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not. They wonder why I do not make it a matter of question, and they put distantly some points in the way of question; but I will not answer interrogatories. I will tell those gentlemen, however, that upon this subject they deceive themselves grossly. Should they be able to establish that the opinion of the sovereign made it impossible to bring the subject forward, they would gain nothing by it; for, should the opinion of the sovereign be what it might, or the opinion of his servants what it might; of the sovereign to dispense with the services, or of the servant to tender his resignation, it would still remain the same. Let these gentlemen but once be able to shake this principle, and they will have done more than they will be willing to avow towards the destruction of the monarchy: they will have established the most extravagant part of an oligarchy that ever was erected in any state; for then neither the sovereign could dismiss, nor the subject resign, without an explanation being made to the public. So that the sovereign, the father of his people, could never part from his servants, unless he condescended to shew that they gave him bad advice; nor his servants tender their resignation, unless they could prove that something was attempted to be imposed upon them which they could not, in their consciences, approve. Now, I would ask, is that the state, or is it desirable it should be the state, of the monarchy of this country? Certainly it is not. The use of the name of the sovereign for the purpose of influencing opinions in this house, or in any deliberative assembly, is justly deemed unconstitutional. The sovereign exercises his opinion on the sentiments, as well as capacity, of his ministers; and if, upon either, he judges them to be incompetent, or in any degree unfit, it is the prerogative, and, with perfect loyalty, let me add, aye the duty, of the crown to dismiss such ministers. Allow me also to say, that if a minister feels, that, from a sense he entertains of his duty, he ought to propose a measure, but is convinced that his endeavours must be ineffectual, to that his services must be limited to a narrower compass than he could desire, and that success, in some material point, is impossible, he ought to be permitted to retire: but, in proportion to the diffi-

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culty which the sovereign may have in accepting the resignation of such a minister, ought to be his love for such a sovereign. I hope I am not deficient in my duty to the best of sovereigns; and I hope the whole ground and motive of my actions will continue to be justified during the whole of his reign. This is all I shall say upon this subject, which may perhaps be saying more than I ought.

With respect, however, to the assurances said, or supposed, to have been held out to the catholics of Ireland, I would add a few words. The honourable gentleman has alluded to a paper circulated in that part of his Majesty's dominions. It was a memorandum sent in the name of a noble lord at the head of the executive government of Ireland—a character revered by all who know him, and whose name I am persuaded will not be profaned, nor mentioned in this country with any disrespect. I know it to be true that the noble lord did feel it right, as a matter of public duty, to make a communication to persons most immediately among the catholics, and to state the motives which led to the late change that took place in his Majesty's councils, in order to prevent any misrepresentation of that subject then adding to the danger of the public tranquillity. I beg to state that matter clearly and distinctly; it was my express desire, not conveyed by myself, but through a noble friend* of mine sitting near me, that the noble lord should take the opportunity of doing this. I do not arrogate any merit for it; but I think it is an answer to any charge against us upon this subject for remissness, that we lost no time in making that representation and explanation of our motives; and the principle of it was this, that the attempt to realize our wishes at this time would only be productive of public embarrassment. The representation was therefore made; but with respect to the particular paper delivered, it was not previously consulted with me how it should be perused, and therefore, for the particular phrases of it I do not hold myself responsible. All the knowledge I derived or conveyed was founded on verbal interpretation. As to the tenour of the paper that I

* Lord Castlereagh.

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have alluded to, the sentiments in it are conformable to those which I have already expressed in this house, and shall again express whenever I have occasion to deliver my sentiments on that subject; and it is fit, not only that this house should know them, but also that the community at large should know them.—I mean this: that a measure of that sort appeared to me to be of much importance under all the circumstances; and that being unable to bring it forward as a measure of government, I thought I could not therefore in honour remain in the situation in which I then stood; and that I was desirous of letting it also be understood, that, whenever the objection I alluded to did not exist, the same obstacle did not interpose, every thing depending on me, as well as those who thought with me, I should do, for that I was desirous of carrying that measure, thinking it of great importance to the empire at large; but that, in the mean time, if any attempt to press it, so as to endanger the public tranquillity, should be made, or to pervert the affection of any part of his Majesty's subjects, we should take our full share in resisting such attempts, and that we should do so with firmness and resolution. These are the sentiments which I expressed, and I did hope that the day would come when, on the part of the catholics, should such a measure be revived, it would be carried in the only way in which I wished to see it carried, which was certainly conformable to the general tranquillity of the empire. As to any other pledge, I beg leave to give none—I am engaged myself to give none—I will give none—either now or at any time. I have contributed, as far as peaceable endeavours could go, according to my judgment, in the best manner I could at the moment, for the general interests of the country.

This is all I shall say on this part of the subject, and I am ashamed to have been obliged to trouble the house so much as I have done, especially as another branch of it remains, and on which I must still say a few words—it relates to a question, Whether any of those who have retired from office, had so pledged themselves to the catholics as to be under the necessity of resigning their offices because they could not perform their

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pledge? I beg leave to deny that; and, what is more satisfactory, I believe I am authorised in denying that the catholics conceived themselves to have received any such pledge. I know that the noble lord to whom I have alluded, and my noble friend near me, who must have been a party to such transaction, if any such had passed, did not so convey to me. I do not now, nor ever did, so conceive it. That the catholics might have conceived such an expectation, is most natural.—Why? Because the more attentively I have reflected on it, especially after the union, the measure has appeared to me to be salutary and expedient; and I can have no reason to think that they were less sanguine in their expectations on that subject than I was. That they thought there was a very probable chance for the measure, is most certain; for I believe there was no one in this house, nor, I believe, in the other house of parliament, who, in argument, has attempted to deny that the difficulties would be considerably diminished on this subject, after the measure of the union was accomplished: I was of that opinion when this subject was debated—I am of that opinion still—and the reasons in favour of it do very much preponderate; this, however, was afterwards given up, on motives of expediency. An expectation in favour of this measure there was; but a pledge, I do not distinctly state, there was none.

Having said thus much on the change of his Majesty's ministers, and the measure of extending the remaining privileges to the catholics of Ireland, I shall not trouble the house, after the able and convincing statements of my right honourable friend, with any arguments as to the cause and progress of the war, which have been the subject of repeated votes in this house. But, if it were necessary, I could enter into a recapitulation of the same arguments used on the other side of the house, with a repetition of the same answers, and with a new force. I shall, however, say a few words with respect to the general plan of the war. That, in the origin of the contest, the re-establishment of royalty in France was desirable in itself, I do not attempt to deny; for, that end accomplished would have necessarily restored tranquillity to Europe;

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but I have never yet stated that its re-establishment was the *sine qua non* of peace. I may class the objects of the war under three different heads. The first was the restoration of royalty, and consequently the restoration of peace; the next was the security of internal tranquillity, and the suppression of destructive and anarchical principles; and the third was, the preservation of the national independence and prosperity. If we have failed in one of these objects, we have most completely accomplished the others; and it is no inconsiderable consolation to us, that we have at this moment, in the wreck of surrounding nations, the glory and satisfaction of maintaining the dignity and happiness of the country. We have kept our resources entire, our honour unimpaired, our integrity inviolate, amid all the discordant elements of jarring confederacies; while those states which did not act in unison with the manly protection which we afforded to their wants and prayers, became the victims of the common enemy. We have not lost, in the midst of all the dreadful convulsions which have devastated Europe, a single foot of territory; and we have given to the rest of the world many chances of salvation. These, Sir, were the general objects of the war; and the details of our operations and successes have been so amply enumerated by my right honourable friend, as to render any comment or observation from me unnecessary.

I have only one word to say on the state of the finances, as a charge has been thrown out that it has been a war of unexampled profusion. If on this head any specific charge be made, I can only say that I shall be at all times ready to meet it. I can, however, say, that I have at least the merit of rendering the system more plain than on any former occasion, even when the sums necessary to provide for the exigencies of the public service did not amount to one-tenth of the present disbursements. That consideration, however, wants no committee on the state of the nation. It is a fair comparison made between the expenses of the present war, and that which preceded it; and it is considered at the same time, that the last war was one carried on and conducted by regular means and with accustomed method, and that the present

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is with a country which stakes its capital in the contest, which, unable to support the warfare with any regular revenue, is compelled to make an inroad upon its stock, and diminish the very source of revenue; and it will be found that the present war has been conducted with unexampled economy and frugality. That an universal pressure has been produced, bearing upon all orders of the people, cannot be denied; but the fact of economical expenditure during the present war must at the same time be admitted. I wish not to go deeply into the subject; but if gentlemen will look at the state of the revenue, excluding the taxes imposed during the present contest, and taking only the taxes which existed at the conclusion of the last peace, they will find that, allowing for some deficiency upon beer and malt, those permanent taxes have increased in produce about 4,000,000*l.* per annum since the period of that peace. They will also find, that, if they look a little further, the taxes appropriated to the sinking fund now produce little less than 5,000,000*l.* per annum, making together the sum of 9,000,000*l.* by which the amount of the permanent revenue has been increased since the conclusion of the last peace—a sum which is within 10,000,000*l.* of the amount of the interest of all the sums borrowed during the nine years that the war has unfortunately continued; that the expenditure of the present has been very considerably less than in all other former wars, cannot for a moment be disputed. The knowledge of this fact is, I hope, sufficient to operate as some antidote to that despondency which might be derived from a general mention of these topics without bringing them to the test of particular detail. This information is surely competent to annihilate all the alarm of lavish expenditure, and ruinous expenditure, which are so frequently sounded, and from which I know of no benefit that can ensue, but only that species of despondency, the tendency of which is immediately to impair the energy of the country, and rob it of half its vigour.

Late as the hour is, I must advert to one other topic, on which I think it necessary to make some observations, although I shall decline all minute investigation: I mean the subject of neutral

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laws and neutral nations, respecting which gentlemen on the other side seem so much inclined to impute rashness, precipitancy, and impolicy to his Majesty's late ministers. They speak as if the blow was already struck, or had been inevitably decided on; but no man can say that all hopes of pacification with the Northern powers are wholly excluded. It was the earnest wish of those ministers, that the extremity of war might be avoided: at the same time they were prepared for both:—either to commence a war with vigour and energy, in defence of the dearest rights and interests of the country, or finally to settle the question in dispute on terms consistent with the honour and dignity of the country. Were his Majesty's ministers tamely to suffer the country to be borne down by the hostility of the Northern powers, or were they quietly to allow those powers to abuse and kick it out of its right? They wished to bring the question to a prompt decision, whilst at the same time they rendered the fall smooth for pacific negociation:—[Here Mr. Pitt went over the grounds of the question relative to neutral bottoms, denying that free bottoms make free goods; contending that contraband of war ought to include naval as well as military stores; maintaining that ports ought to be considered in a state of blockade when it was unsafe for vessels to enter them, although the ports were not actually blocked up; and denying the right of convoy to preclude neutral ships from being searched. In support of these opinions, he quoted the decisions of courts of law, and treaties entered into between this country and various other powers, in which he contended the rights now claimed by this country had been expressly acknowledged. He then proceeded as follows:]—It was during the short time, Sir, that the right honourable gentleman * filled the office of secretary of state, who, from the greatness of his genius, might have been led to those bold attempts which by common minds would be denominated rashness—it was during that short period that he advised his Majesty to cede these rights in behalf of the Empress of Russia, for the purpose of purchasing her friendship, and preventing that sovereign from joining France, with whom we were then at war.

* Mr. Fox.

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How far this was good policy I will not now pretend to discuss: but in this, as in every other cession of the same nature, it is plain the right rested in this country, since it could not give what it did not possess; it was ceded as a matter of favour, not given up as a matter of right. Let it, however, be granted, that it was an act of sound policy to make that cession to Russia, that it was so at that time when our naval inferiority was too unfortunately conspicuous—when we were at war with France, with Spain, and with Holland, and when the addition of Russian hostility might have been a serious evil; does it follow that, at the present moment, when the fleets of all the Northern powers combined with those of France and Spain, and of Holland, would be unequal to a contest with the great and superior naval power of England—does it follow, that we are to sacrifice the maritime greatness of Britain at the shrine of Russia? Shall we allow entire freedom to the trade of France?—shall we suffer that country to send out her 12,000,000 of exports, and receive her imports in return, to enlarge private capital, and increase the public stock?—shall we allow her to receive naval stores undisturbed, and to rebuild and refit that navy which the valour of our seamen has destroyed;—shall we voluntarily give up our maritime consequence, and expose ourselves to scorn, to derision, and contempt? No man can deplore more than I do the loss of human blood—the calamities and the distresses of war; but will you silently stand by, and, acknowledging these monstrous and unheard-of principles of neutrality, ensure your enemy against the effects of your hostility? Four nations have leagued to produce a new code of maritime laws, in defiance of the established law of nations, and in defiance of the most solemn treaties and engagements, which they endeavour arbitrarily to force upon Europe; what is this but the same jacobin principle which proclaimed the Rights of Man, which produced the French revolution, which generated the wildest anarchy, and spread horror and devastation through that unfortunate country? Whatever shape it assumes, it is a violation of public faith, it is a violation of the rights of England, and imperiously calls upon Englishmen to resist it even to the

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last shilling and the last drop of blood, rather than tamely submit to degrading concession, or meanly yield the rights of the country to shameful usurpation.

The motion, upon a division, was negatived;

Ayes 105

Noes 291

November 3, 1801.

The House having proceeded to the order of the day for taking into consideration the preliminary articles of peace with the French Republic, that part of his Majesty's speech which related to the preliminary treaty, and also the treaty itself were read.

It was then moved by Sir Edmund Hartop,—"That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, thanking his Majesty for being graciously pleased to order the preliminaries of peace with France to be laid before that House —To assure his Majesty of their just sense of this fresh instance of his paternal care for the welfare and happiness of his people; and to express their firm reliance, that the final ratification of those preliminaries will be highly advantageous to the interests, and honourable to the character, of the British nation."

Mr. Pitt delivered his sentiments in support of the address:

He said, that upon a subject in itself of such importance, and one upon which it was unfortunately his lot to differ from some with whom it had been his happiness to have been connected by the strictest ties of friendship, for the greater part of his life, he was anxious to deliver his sentiments, before the attention of the house, and his own powers, should be exhausted by fatigue. In considering the question, whether these terms should be accepted or rejected, there was one proposition which he might lay down, with, he believed, but little danger of contradiction, and that was, that for some time past, all rational, all thinking men, had concurred in an opinion, that whatever their wishes might have been, whatever hopes might at different

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periods of the war have been entertained, yet, that after the events which had taken place on the continent of Europe, the question of peace or war between Great Britain and France, became a question of terms only. In laying down this proposition, he desired not to have it admitted in words, and rejected in substance. After the conclusion of the peace between France and the great continental powers, after the dissolution of the confederacy of the states of Europe—a confederacy which he had supported to the utmost of his power, and with respect to which he still retained the same sentiments;—after the dissolution, however, of that confederacy, it became merely a question of the terms to be obtained for ourselves, and for those allies who still remained faithful to us and to their own interests. In saying this, he was aware that he differed from many, of whose judgments he had the highest opinion, and whom he both loved and honoured; but it was the firm conviction of his mind, and it was his duty both to the house and the public, fully and candidly to state his sentiments upon the subject. When he said, that the question of peace or war between this country and France was a question of terms only, he wished to be understood as being more anxious about the general complexion of peace, as affecting the character of this country for good faith, honour, and generosity, than he was about any particular acquisition that might be made, or any specific object that might be attained.

In considering the terms that ought to be accepted, it would be necessary to inquire, in the first instance, what would be the expense of continuing the contest, what were the difficulties with which it would be attended, and what hopes could be entertained of its ultimate success? It was undoubtedly the duty of every government, in negociating a treaty of peace, to obtain the best possible terms; but it was sometimes difficult to know how far particular points might be pressed without running the risk of breaking off the negociation. For his own part, he had no hesitation to declare, that he would rather close with an enemy upon terms short even of the fair pretensions of the

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country, provided they were not inconsistent with honour and security, than continue the contest for any particular possession. He knew that when he had the honour of a seat in his Majesty's councils, if it had come to a question of terms, and the pacific dispositions of the enemy corresponded with ours, he for one should have acted upon that principle; and knowing that to be his own feeling upon the subject, he should neither act with fairness nor candour if he did not apply it to another administration. He did not pretend to state to the house, that this peace fully answered all his wishes: but the government had undoubtedly endeavoured to obtain the best terms they could for the country; and he was ready to contend, that the difference between the terms we had obtained and those of retaining all which we had given up, would not have justified ministers in protracting the war. He was anxious upon this subject to speak plainly, because it was one on which he ought to have no reserve, either with the house or with the country. What the terms were to which this country ought to look in the present state of Europe, had been, in his opinion, most accurately and most ably described by his noble friend *. The principle upon which administration acted, and in which he perfectly concurred with them, was, that in selecting those acquisitions which we wished to retain, it was our interest not to aim so much at keeping possession of any fresh conquest which we did not materially want, as to endeavour to retain those acquisitions which, from their situation, or from other causes, were the best calculated for confirming and securing our ancient territories. The object which must naturally first present itself to every minister, must be to give additional vigour to our maritime strength, and security to our colonial possessions. It was to them we were indebted for the unparalleled exertions which we have been enabled to make in the course of this long and eventful contest; it was by them that we were enabled, in the wreck of Europe, not only to effect our own security, but to hold out to

* Lord Hawkesbury.

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our allies the means of safety, if they had been but true to themselves.

In thus considering the subject, it was necessary to look to the leading quarters of the world in which we were to seek for this security. It was evident that our acquisitions were all in the Mediterranean, in the East and in the West Indies. Those who thought that this country ought to retain all its acquisitions, would of course consider any cession made by us as incompatible either with our safety or with our honour. But those who did not go that length, would agree with him in thinking, that when we were to give back a part, and retain a part of our conquests, it was our duty to consider, which of them were the best calculated to promote the two great leading objects to which he had before alluded; and if it should appear, upon examining the present treaty of peace, that in two out of the three quarters which he had mentioned, viz. in the East and West Indies, we had retained such possessions, as were the best calculated to effect the security of our ancient possessions, we had, every circumstance considered, done as much as could be expected. Without undervaluing our conquests in the Mediterranean, and the gallant achievements by which they had been effected, especially the capture of Malta, (and certainly no man was less inclined to undervalue them than he was,) yet it must be admitted by every man acquainted with the real interests of this country, that, compared with the East and West Indies, the Mediterranean is but a secondary consideration: indeed this was a proposition so obvious, that it was unnecessary for him to enter into any arguments upon the subject.

Of the importance of the Levant trade, much had formerly been said: volumes had been written upon it, and even nations had gone to war to obtain it. The value of that trade, even in the periods to which he had alluded, had been much exaggerated; but even supposing those statements to have been correct, they applied to times when the other great branches of our trade, to which we owed our present greatness and our naval

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superiority, did not exist—he alluded to the great increase of our manufactures—to our great internal trade—to our commerce with Ireland, with the United States of America, with the East and the West Indies: it was these which formed the sinews of our strength, and compared with which the Levant trade was trifling. In another point of view, he admitted that possessions in the Mediterranean were of importance to enable us to co-operate with any continental power or powers, with whom we might happen to be in alliance. He agreed with his noble friend*, that when there was not a powerful confederacy on the continent in our favour, this country, with all its naval superiority, could not make any very serious efforts on the continent; yet, in case of such a confederacy, much undoubtedly would be done by the co-operation of the British navy in the Mediterranean. But at the present moment, and situated as Europe at present is, we ought not, upon any one principle of wisdom or policy, to prefer acquisitions in the Mediterranean, to the attainment of the means of giving additional security to our possessions in the East and West Indies. It was upon this principle that he heartily approved of the choice which ministers had made, in preferring our security in the West Indies to any acquisitions that we might have made in the Mediterranean; because he considered it as a rule of prudence which ought never to be deviated from, not unnecessarily to mortify the feelings or pride of an enemy—["Hear! hear!" from the other side]—Gentlemen, from their manner, seemed to think that he had not always adhered to that maxim: he would not interrupt his argument by entering into a personal defence of himself; but, whenever gentlemen were inclined to discuss that point, he was perfectly ready to meet them, giving them the full benefit of any expressions that he had ever used. Supposing the events of the war to be equally balanced, and in negociating for one of two possessions, both of equal value, but that our possessing one of them would hurt the feelings or mortify the pride of the enemy more than the other, he should think that a justifiable reason for selecting the other: he did not say this from any affec-

* Lord Castlereagh.

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tation of sentiment, or peculiar tenderness towards the enemy, but because an enemy would not give up such a possession without obtaining from us more than an equivalent. Upon this principle, he hoped the house would concur with him in thinking, that we ought not to insist upon retaining the island of Malta. If our object had been to retain any possession which had formerly belonged to the enemy, and which we had captured from them, with the view of adding to the security of our old dominions, then Malta did not come under the description, because it was not an ancient possession of the enemy, but had been acquired by him unjustly from a third power. It therefore appeared to him more consistent with wisdom and sound policy, rather to put Malta under the protection of a third power, capable of protecting it, than, by retaining it ourselves, to mortify the pride and attract the jealousy of the enemy.

The other possession which we had acquired, and upon the propriety of retaining which, much had been said, was Minorca. With respect to this island, he perfectly concurred in the opinion of his noble friend*, that it would always belong to the power who possessed the greatest maritime strength: the experience of the four last wars proved the justice of this observation; for Minorca had regularly shifted hands according to the preponderance of maritime strength in the Mediterranean. In time of peace, Minorca was a possession of no great importance or utility; in time of war, it could be of no use whatever, unless we possessed a maritime superiority; and if we did possess that superiority, experience had shewn that it would probably fall into our hands. Upon these grounds, he, for one, would not have advised much to be given in another quarter for the purpose of enabling us to retain the island of Minorca, doubting, as he did, whether in time of peace it was worth the expense of a garrison. He thought, therefore, that we were justified in looking to the East and West Indies for the possessions which it was our interest to retain; but he could not help expressing his regret, that circumstances were such as to prevent us from retaining a place so important

* Lord Hawkesbury.

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in many points of view, as the island of Malta: he lamented also, that it was not possible for us to have made a more definitive arrangement respecting its future fate; but unless we had been prepared to say that we would retain it ourselves, he did not know any better plan that could be adopted, than to make it independent both of England and France.

In turning his attention to the East Indies, he certainly saw cause for regret, because the opinion he had been taught to entertain of the value of the Cape of Good Hope was much lighter than that expressed by his noble friend. He knew there were great authorities against him; but on the other hand, from what he had heard from a noble marquis *, and from a right honourable friend † of his, who had long presided over the affairs of India, he was induced to think the Cape of Good Hope a more important place than it had been represented on this occasion. But thinking thus highly as he did of the Cape, he considered it as far inferior indeed to Ceylon, which he looked upon to be, of all the places upon the face of the globe, the one which would add most to the security of our East-Indian possessions, and as placing our dominions in that quarter in a greater degree of safety than they had been in from the first hour that we set our foot on the continent of India. An honourable friend ‡ of his, on the other side of the house, had lamented that we had not stipulated for the retention of Cochin, and stated, that in the former negociations Lord Malmesbury had been instructed to insist upon its remaining in our possession. How far Lord Malmesbury was instructed to insist upon, or recede from, certain points contained in that *projet*, he did not feel himself now at liberty to state; but he believed no man would be inclined to say, that it must of necessity be an *ultimatum*, because it was contained in a *projet*. Indeed one of the complaints which we had against the French upon that occasion was, that they wanted us, contrary to every diplomatic form, to give in our ultimatum first. He knew that it was the opinion, at that time, of a noble marquis to whom he

* Marquis Cornwallis. † Mr. Dundas.
‡ Mr. T. Grenville.

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had before alluded, and who had rendered such essential services in India—but he was wrong in particularising India, for there was scarcely a quarter of the globe in which this country had not derived important advantages from the exalted talents and virtues of that noble person, who was now about to receive the last reward of his services, in putting the finishing hand to a treaty which would give peace to the world, after a war in which he had had so large a share in averting from this country the dangers which threatened the most vulnerable part of our possessions—that the retaining of Cochin was necessary to the security of our Indian dominions. But the noble marquis, he was sure, did not now retain the same opinion, because its importance then depended upon its being a frontier post, to secure us from an enemy whom we had since completely destroyed. It would not surely be contended for a moment, that, when the power of Tippoo Sultaun was entire, and when there was a direct road from his dominions into our's, Cochin was not of infinitely more importance than it could be now when his dominions were in our possession. He did not wish to give a ludicrous illustration of this argument; but he was really so much astonished at what had been said upon this point, that he could not help stating a case which appeared to him directly in point with the present. If we were to look into the ancient periods of our history, when Scotland was a separate kingdom, hostile to us, and in strict alliance with France, the town of Berwick-upon-Tweed was a place of the greatest importance to us as a fortified frontier post; but surely it could not be said to be of equal importance now, when Scotland and England are united into one kingdom. This parallel did not appear to him to be exaggerated; and if Cochin was of no importance as a military post, he was inclined to think that its commercial value was not very great. As to the advantages that we must derive from the possession of Ceylon, it was unnecessary for him to enlarge upon them—they were too obvious not to be felt by every body. With regard to the Cape, he had before stated his opinion of its value; but if we could not retain it without continuing the war, he thought ministers had acted

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wisely in giving it up upon the terms they had, because, in point of value, it was inferior to Ceylon and Trinidad.

He now came to the consideration of our situation in the West Indies; and he was decidedly of opinion, that, of all the islands which the fortune of war had put into our hands in that quarter, Trinidad was the most valuable—he should prefer it even to Martinico — undoubtedly as a protection to our Leeward Islands it was the better of the two, and, in point of intrinsic value, the more important. As to its value as a post from which we might direct our future operations against the possessions of Spain in South America, it must be felt by every one to be the best situated of any part in the West Indies. He had always been of opinion, that when it came to be a question merely of terms between England and France, we ought to retain the possession of one of the great naval stations in the West Indies, because our great want in that quarter was a naval port. The four great naval stations were Guadaloupe, Martinico, St. Lucia, and Trinidad; and those of Trinidad and Martinico were the best, and the former the better of the two.

He would now trouble the house shortly upon the subject of our allies. With respect to the Porte we had done every thing that we were bound to do: nay more — we had compelled the French to the evacuation of Egypt, and had stipulated for the integrity of her dominions. There was another object which we had obtained, and to which he did not think so much importance had been given as it deserved; he meant the establishment of an infant power, viz. the republic of the Seven Islands, which would perhaps have otherwise fallen under the dominion of France: this certainly was an acquisition of great importance for this country, not inferior, perhaps, to the possession of Malta itself. The only answer he had heard upon the subject was, that there had been a treaty concluded between France and the Porte, by which the evacuation of Egypt was stipulated for; but it could not be for a moment doubted that it was to the exertions of this country, and to the brilliant achievements of our army and navy, that the evacuation of Egypt must be attributed; and if France had, by a

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diplomatic trick, taken the advantage of this in two treaties, that could not derogate from the merit of this country.

With regard to Naples, we were not bound to do any thing for her. She had even desired to be released from her engagements to us: but she was compelled to this by an over-ruling necessity; and the government of this country, in its conduct towards Naples, had only acted in conformity to its own interests, and that upon large and liberal grounds, in endeavouring to repair the fortunes of an ally who had given way only to force. The honourable gentleman* had argued, that we ought to have guaranteed to Naples, her dominions, because, from the contiguity of the Cisalpine republic to Naples, the French might, in pursuance of the treaty, evacuate their territories one day, and re-enter them the next; but if, from the situation of Europe, the present stipulation could not effect the security of Naples, it must be obvious that any guarantee would be equally unavailing.

With regard to Sardinia, the same observations were applicable; for we were not bound to interfere for her, unless it was to be maintained that we were to take upon ourselves the task of settling the affairs of the continent. But if we were unable to settle the affairs of that part of the continent which was in our own neighbourhood, with what effect of propriety could we attempt it in Italy? He was ready to grant that we ought to have claimed Piedmont for its sovereign, but could we have obtained it? Could we have procured its restoration, unless we could have disposed of the King of Etruria, unless we could have gained the Cisalpine and Ligurian republics, and driven the French from the mountains of Switzerland? Unless we could have done all this, it would have been in vain to restore the King of Sardinia to his capital, surrounded as he would have been by the French, and by their dependent and affiliated republics.

As to Portugal, every body must lament her misfortunes. But if it was right in her to ask to be released from her engagements to us, and if it was right in us to consent to it, then clearly we were absolved from any obligation to her, because an obligation

* Mr. T. Grenville.

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which is put an end to on the one side, can, upon no fair reasoning, be said to continue on the other. As to the cession of Olivenza, it certainly was not of any great importance: but much had been said about the territory which France had obtained from Portugal in South America, and a considerable degree of geographical knowledge had been displayed in tracing the course of rivers; but gentlemen should recollect, that a South-American and an European river were materially different; for when you were talking of the banks of a river in South America, it was in fact very often little less than the coasts of an ocean. It had been said, "you affect to guarantee the integrity of Portugal, but it is only after France and Spain have taken every thing they wished for." But this again was not correct. The treaty of Badajos certainly did not give to France all she desired, because France, by a subsequent treaty, extorts another cession of still greater importance to her. What happens then? Portugal has given up this second portion of her territory by force, when you interfere and cancel the second treaty, and bring them back to the stipulations in the first. To you, then, Portugal owes this difference in the limits of her South-American empire, and to her you have acted not only with good faith, but with dignified liberality.

The only remaining ally was the Prince of Orange. From our ancient connexions, from our gratitude for the services of the house of Orange at the period of the revolution, from his connexion with our sovereign, we could not but take a lively interest in his fate, and we had shewn it by our conduct: he was not to be told of the guarantee of the constitution of Holland, without recalling to the recollection of the house the efforts we had made to defend, the unparalleled exertions we had used to restore him to his dominions. Even on the present occasion his interests had not been neglected: we did interfere for him; and we were told that his interests were at that time the subject of negociation, and that he would receive an indemnity. Even if we were to take that upon ourselves, it ought not to stand in the

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way of a great national arrangement. Thus stood the case with regard to our acquisitions and to our allies.

But it had been said, that we ought to have obtained more; that we ought to have obtained something to balance the great increase of power which France had obtained; that we have given France the means of increasing her maritime strength, and, in short, that "we have signed the death-warrant of the country." Now, in the first place, if we had retained all our conquests, it would not have made any difference to us in point of security. He did not mean to say, he would not have retained them all if he could; but they were no more important than as they would give us a little more or a little less of colonial power, and only tended to promote our security by increasing our finance. But would the acquisition of all these islands have enabled us to counterbalance the power which France had acquired on the continent? They would only give us a little more wealth; but a little more wealth would be badly purchased by a little more war: he should think so, even if we could be sure that one year's more war would give it to us, particularly when it was recollected how many years we had now been engaged in this contest. In speaking, however, about our resources, he would take upon himself to state, (and he hoped the house would give him credit for some knowledge upon the subject,) that if any case of necessity should arise, or if our honour should require another contest, we were far, very far indeed, from the end of our pecuniary resources, which, he was happy to say, were greater than the enemy, or even the people of this country themselves, had an idea of. For the purpose of defence, or for the security of our honour, we had still resources in abundance: but they ought to be kept for those purposes, and not lavished away in continuing a contest with the certainty of enormous expense. We might sit down in a worse relative situation than we were in at present, our object not obtained, our security not effected. As to the general point, we could not now think of balancing the powers on the continent. It was undoubtedly right, that if the French had conquered much, we

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ought also to endeavour to retain much; but in treating with France we were not to consider what France had got from other countries, but what was the relative situation between us and France.

Gentlemen had talked of the *uti possidetis*; but France had not insisted upon the principle in her treaties with the powers on the continent;—she had not retained the possession of all she had conquered, and consequently we could not be justified in insisting upon that principle. He admitted, that if a country had increased in power and territory faster than its natural rival, (for, without speaking hastily, he must consider France in that character,) that might justify the engaging in a confederacy to bring him back to his ancient strength; but if he had been able to dissolve that confederacy, that would perhaps be the worst reason in the world why, when we came to make peace with him, we were to expect the more favourable terms. It would be but bad reasoning, if one power were to say to another, "You are much too powerful for us, we have not the means of reducing that power by force, and therefore you must cede to us a portion of your territories, in order to make us equal in point of strength." Gentlemen might undoubtedly wish this, but that which regulated wishes would not regulate actions: many things might be prayed for, that were hardly to be expected in reality. But he did not see that we were giving to the enemy all this colonial wealth and maritime power which had been represented; what we gave back was not only smaller than what we retained, but much of it was in a ruined state. He was therefore inclined to think, that, for many years at least, we should have the colonial trade, and that too increasing in extent and value. That we should not have been justified in asking for more, he did not mean to assert; but that we should have got more, or that we ought to have continued the war to increase our possessions, was a proposition to which he could not give his assent.

Allusions had been made to former opinions and language; upon this subject he should only say, that, peace having been restored between England and France, forbearance of language

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and terms of respect were proper; but it would be affectation and hypocrisy in him to say that he had changed, or could change, his opinion of the character of the person presiding in France, until he saw a train of conduct which would justify that change. He would not now occupy the attention of the house by entering into a discussion of the origin of the war; the unjust aggression which was made upon us was established by recent evidence; but it was unnecessary to enter into it now, because upon that subject the opinion of the house and of the country was fixed. The great object of the war on our part was defence for ourselves and for the rest of the world, in a war waged against most of the nations of Europe, but against us with particular malignity. Security was our great object; there were different means of accomplishing it, with better or worse prospects of success; and, according to the different variations of policy occasioned by a change of circumstances, we still pursued our great object, security. In order to obtain it we certainly did look for the subversion of that government which was founded upon revolutionary principles. We never at any one period said, that, as a *sine qua non*, we insisted upon the restoration of the old government of France,—we only said, there was no government with which we could treat. This was our language up to 1796: but in no one instance did we ever insist upon restoring the monarchy; though, said Mr. Pitt, I do not hesitate to acknowledge, that it would have been more consistent with the wishes of ministers, and with the interest and security of this country. I am equally ready to confess, that I gave up my hopes with the greatest reluctance; and I shall, to my dying day, lament that there were not, on the part of the other powers of Europe, efforts corresponding to our own, for the accomplishment of that great work. There were periods during the continuance of the war, in which I had hopes of our being able to put together the scattered fragments of that great and venerable edifice; to have restored the exiled nobility of France; to have restored a government, certainly not free from defects, but built upon sober and regular foundations, in the stead of

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that mad system of innovation which threatened, and had nearly accomplished, the destruction of Europe.

Me si fata meis paterentur ducere vitam
Auspiciis, et sponte mea componere curas;
Urbem Trojanam primùm dulcesque meorum
Reliquias colerem, Priami tecta alta manerent,
Et recidiva manu posuissem Pergama victis.

This, it was true, had been found unattainable; but we had the satisfaction of knowing, that we had survived the violence of the revolutionary fever, and we had seen the extent of its principles abated:—We had seen jacobinism deprived of its fascination; we had seen it stripped of the name and pretext of liberty; it had shewn itself to be capable only of destroying, not of building, and that it must necessarily end in a military despotism. He trusted this important lesson would not be thrown away upon the world. Being disappointed in our hopes of being able to drive France within her ancient limits, and even to make barriers against her further incursions, it became then necessary, with the change of circumstances, to change our objects for he did not know a more fatal error, than to look only at one object, and obstinately to pursue it, when the hope of accomplishing it no longer remained. If it became impossible for us to obtain the full object of our wishes, wisdom and policy both required that we should endeavour to obtain that which was next best. In saying this, he was not sensible of inconsistency, either in his former language or conduct, in refusing to treat with the person who now holds the destinies of France; because when he formerly declined treating with him, he then said, that if events should take the turn they had since done, he should have no objection to treat with him.

He would now add but very little more to what he had said. He could not agree with those gentlemen who seemed to think that France had grown so much stronger in proportion to what we had; these gloomy apprehensions seemed to him to be almost wholly without foundation. This country always was, and he

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trusted always would be, able to check the ambitious projects of France, and to give that degree of assistance to the rest of Europe which they had done upon this occasion; and he wished it had been done with more effect. But when the immense acquisitions which France had made were taken into consideration on the one hand, it was but fair, on the other, to consider what she had lost in population, in commerce, in capital, and in habits of industry: the desolation produced by convulsions, such as France had undergone, could not be repaired even by large acquisitions of territory. Comparing, therefore, what France has gained with what she had lost, this enormous increase of power was not quite so apparent as some gentlemen on the other side seemed to apprehend. When he took into consideration the immense wealth of this country, and the natural and legitimate growth of that wealth, so much superior to the produce of rapacity and plunder, he could not but entertain the hope, founded in justice and in nature, of its solidity. This hope was strengthened by collateral considerations, when he looked to the great increase of our maritime power; when he contemplated the additional naval triumphs that we had obtained; when he looked to the brilliant victories of our armies, gained over the flower of the troops of France,—troops which, in the opinion of many, were invincible—when he reflected upon these glorious achievements, though he could not but lament our disappointment in some objects, he had the satisfaction of thinking that we had added strength to our security, and lustre to our national character. Since the treaty which had taken place at Lisle, we had increased in wealth and commerce. But there were some important events which had given the greatest consolidation to our strength, and as such, should not be forgotten. The destruction of the power of Tippoo Sultaun in India, who had fallen a victim to his attachment to France, and his perfidy to us, would surely be thought an important achievement. It had frequently been observed, that great dangers frequently produced, in nations of a manly cast of mind, great and noble exertions: so when the most unparalleled danger threatened the sister kingdom, the feelings of a common cause between the people of both coun-

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tries had enabled them to overcome prejudices, some of them perhaps laudable, and all of them deep-rooted, and led to that happy union, which adds more to the power and strength of the British empire, than all the conquests of one and indivisible France do to that country. These were consolations which he wished to recall to the recollection of those who entertained gloomy apprehensions about the strength and resources of Great Britain.

If any additional proofs were wanting to prove her ability to protect her honour and maintain her interests, let gentlemen look to the last campaign, and they would see Great Britain contending against a powerful confederacy in the North; they would see her fighting for those objects at once in Egypt and in the Baltic, and they would see her successful in both. We had shewn, that we were ready to meet the threatened invasion at home, and could send troops to triumph over the French in the barren sands of Egypt, before a man could escape from Toulon, to reinforce their blocked-up army; we had met the menaced invasion by attacking France on her own coasts, and we had seen those ships which were destined for the invasion of this country moored and chained to their shores, and finding protection only n their batteries. These were not only sources of justifiable pride, but grounds of solid security. What might be the future object of the Chief Consul of France, he knew not; but if it were to exercise a military despotism, he would venture to predict, that he would not select this country for the first object of his attack; and if we were true to ourselves, we had little to fear from that attack, let it come when it would. But though he did not entertain apprehensions, yet he could not concur with those who thought we ought to lay aside all caution; if such policy were adopted, there would indeed be ground for most serious apprehensions: he hoped every measure would be adopted, which prudence could suggest, to do away animosity between the two countries, and to avoid every ground of irritation by sincerity on our part. This, however, on the other hand, was not to be done by paying abject court to France. We must depend for security only

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upon ourselves. If, however, the views of France were correspondent with our own, we had every prospect of enjoying a long peace. He saw some symptoms that they were, though upon this he had no certain knowledge; but he would never rely upon personal character for the security of his country. He was inclined to hope every thing that was good, but he was bound to act as if he feared otherwise.

He concluded by giving his assent to the motion.

The question upon the address was afterwards put, and agreed to without a division.

June 3, 1803.

COLONEL PATTEN, having previously given notice of a motion of censure against his Majesty's ministers, this day submitted to the House the following resolutions;—

1. "That it appears to this House, from the declaration issued by his Majesty on the 18th day of May last, and laid before this House by his Majesty's command, that the conduct of the French republic, during the whole period which has elapsed since the conclusion of the definitive treaty of peace, is considered by his Majesty's ministers as having been altogether inconsistent with every principle of good faith, moderation, and justice; as having exhibited one continued series of aggression, violence, and insult, and as necessarily creating a thorough conviction of a system deliberately adopted by France for the purpose of degrading, vilifying, and insulting his Majesty and his government.

2. "That his Majesty's ministers having throughout the whole period, from the conclusion of the definitive treaty of peace, to the issuing of his Majesty's declaration of the 18th day of May last, neither communicated to parliament any knowledge of the sense which they now appear to have entertained respecting the conduct and system of France, nor any regular information of the particulars on which the same was founded, or of the steps taken by his Majesty's government thereupon, have thereby withheld from this House the necessary materials for a due and full discharge of its constitutional functions; and that, by encouraging throughout the country an unfounded security and confidence in the permanence of peace, they have embarrassed and perplexed our commerce, have deceived the expectations, and unnecessarily harassed the spirit of the people, and have materially increased and aggravated the difficulties of our actual situation.

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3. "That it was the duty of his Majesty's ministers to make timely and adequate representations against such acts as have, in their judgment, constituted a series of aggressions violence, and insult on the part of France. That, by dignified and temperate remonstrances, followed up with consistency, and sustained with firmness, either the course and progress of such acts would have been arrested, without the necessity of recurring to arms, or the determination of the French government to persist therein, would have been distinctly ascertained, before his Majesty had, by the reduction of his forces, and the surrender of his conquests, put out of his hands the most effectual means of obtaining redress and reparation. That this essential duty appears to have been, in a very great degree, neglected by his Majesty's ministers; and that such their neglect and omission have been highly injurious to the public interests.

4. "That it appears to this House, that on the 17th of October last, counter orders were dispatched by his Majesty's government, revoking the orders before given for the surrender of the Cape of Good Hope, and of the other conquests then held by his Majesty; and that the final order, by virtue of which his Majesty's forces actually evacuated the Cape, was sent on the 16th of November. That on the said 16th of November, the hostile spirit of France had (in the judgment of his Majesty's ministers, as now avowed by them) already been manifested, for more than six months, by one continued series of aggression, violence, and insult, for which neither reparation nor redress had, down to that moment, been obtained. That the offensive principle had already been distinctly advanced, of excluding his Majesty from all concern in the affairs of the Continent; that the Spanish and other priories had already been withdrawn from the Order of Malta; Piedmont, Parma, Placentia, and Elba, had been annexed to France; Switzerland had been attacked and subjugated, and the remonstrance of his Majesty's government upon that subject had been treated with indignity and contempt; the territory of the Batavian republic was at that very moment still occupied by the armies of the Chief Consul of France, and its internal administration still controlled by his interference: and the French government was then actually engaged in the pursuit of those plans and measures for the subversion of the Turkish empire, to which his Majesty's declaration refers, as a violation of the treaty of peace. That in directing, under such circumstances, the final surrender of the Cape, without having previously explained or arranged the numerous points of difference and complaint which then actually subsisted between the two governments, his Majesty's ministers acted in contradiction to the sense which they had themselves manifested of their own duty, and have improvidently exposed to danger some of the most important interests of his Majesty's dominions.

5. "That, by all these instances of misconduct in the present ministers

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of his Majesty's government, they have proved themselves unworthy of the confidence reposed in them in such an important crisis as the present."

As soon as the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Addington) sat down, Mr. PITT rose:

If I possessed a full and clear opinion on the merits of the case, to the extent of either directly negativing or adopting the resolutions which have been proposed, I should, following the unbiassed dictates of my conscience, give my vote on that side to which my judgment inclined. If I agreed with my right honourable friend*, in thinking that the first steps we ought to take in duty to the public, were, by a retrospective survey of the conduct of ministers, to judge of their fitness to exercise the functions to which they are called; and if, upon that result, I were forced to conclude, that the papers on the table afforded evidence of criminality, of incapacity, of misconduct, then, however painful the sacrifice of private feelings might be, in taking such a part in the case of individuals whom I respect, I should feel myself bound to concur in an address to his Majesty, for the removal of his ministers. On the other hand, if I were one of those who considered the explanation afforded by ministers upon general points, so clear as to justify a decided negative of the propositions moved by the honourable gentleman over the way—a negative which would imply approbation, (for in such a matter to avoid ground of censure, may be considered the same as to have deserved applause,) I should feel myself happy in joining in a decided negative to the motion. But to this extent, either of approbation or of censure, I am unable to go. I cannot concur in the latter, or in the extent of the charges involved in the propositions which have been moved.

Besides, I am aware of the inconveniences that would result from supporting any measure which has the tendency of the present motion, unless the clearest necessity exists for it. Though I do not dispute the right of this house to address the king for the removal of ministers, yet nothing is more mischievous than a parliamentary interference by declared censure, rendering the con-

* Mr. Grenville.

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tinuance of ministers in office impossible, unless that interference is justified by extraordinary exigency of affairs. Not disputing the right of the house, I contend that the right is to be governed by a sound discretion and by the public interest. We must look to considerations of public expediency and of public safety. There are some questions in the discussion of which gentlemen must feel more than they can well express, and this, with regard to the interference of parliament for removing ministers, is one of them. Admitting even that there were considerable grounds of dissatisfaction at the conduct of ministers, would it tend to promote those exertions, to encourage those sacrifices, which the difficulty and danger of our situation require? Would our means of sustaining the struggle in which we are engaged, and of calling forth those resources necessary for our defence, be improved by cutting short the date of administration, and unsettling the whole system of government? To displace one administration, and to introduce a new one, is not the work of a day. With all the functions of executive power suspended; with the regular means of communication between parliament and the throne interrupted; weeks, nay months, wasted in doubt, uncertainty, and inaction, how could the public safety consent to a state of things so violent and unnatural, as would result from parliament rendering one administration incapable of exercising any public functions, without any other efficient government being obtained in its stead? I will venture to hint also, that after such a step any administration that should succeed, be it what it might, and what it would be must still depend upon the crown, would feel itself placed in a most delicate situation. To put the matter as conscientiously and delicately as possible, would any set of men feel their introduction to power in these circumstances to be such as to enable them to discharge, in a manner satisfactory to themselves, the duties which so eventful a period must impose? These are considerations for the crown and the public, and they outweigh all those which present themselves, on a partial view of the advantages which could be hoped from a prosecution of that censure and dissolution of administration, to which the propositions tend.

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I am aware that the right honourable gentleman* on the floor, and my friends on the same bench with him, must feel their situation irksome under the weight of a question so important, in which they are personally involved, remaining undecided. Nevertheless, when other sacrifices are demanded for the public interest, personal feelings must be overlooked. Those who with me have not made up their minds to the extent of censuring ministers by the adoption of the propositions, or of approving their conduct by agreeing to a direct negative, must pursue some middle course. They cannot do that which must imply approbation, when they do not find from the case made out that approbation has been deserved; neither can they vote severe censure, leading to an address for removal, when they do not consider the charges made as completely sustained.

Having stated the opposite lines of conduct which present themselves in deciding upon the propositions, I do not intend to enter into any detailed discussion of the papers. I wish, if good cannot be obtained by continuing to discuss them comparable to the evil of interrupting the course of our parliamentary duty, to suspend them altogether. Since things more urgent and more important demand our care, let us make good the parliamentary pledge we have given. I shall behold with much greater satisfaction as first proofs of our determination to support his Majesty with our lives and fortunes, you, Sir, presenting a strong bill of supply providing resources, not merely for every demand of public service, but adequate to every scale of exertion; a measure that will display and call forth the means of sustaining the struggle, not merely for one year, but till we shall have brought it to a successful issue; some measures by which we shall be enabled to complete our army, and to call into action the national strength, and give activity to all the military skill, discipline, and experience we possess. I do not know if gentlemen feel as I do upon this occasion, or if I have been successful in making my feelings understood. Impressed as I am with those feelings, and unprepared for the decisive vote which is offered in the direct negative or

* The Chancellor of the Exchequer.

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affirmative of the propositions before the house, I move "that the other orders of the day be now read."

Mr. Pitt's motion was rejected;

Ayes 56
Noes 339

The original question was then put and negatived;

Ayes 34
Noes 275

July 22, 1803.

The General Defence bill was this day read a third time. On the question that "the bill should pass," and after Colonel Crawford and the Secretary at War had delivered their sentiments upon it,

Mr. Pitt rose:

It is not my intention, Mr. Speaker, to trouble the house at any considerable length, but I cannot avoid submitting a few observations upon what fell from the honourable officer *, and from my right honourable friend †. Much, Sir, of what has fallen from the gallant officer is entitled to great attention, and entirely meets my approbation; but I must observe, that these considerations are not now for the first time introduced. With regard to the best means of national defence, such as a selection of the great leading posts, an examination of the most effectual means of operation to resist the progress of an enemy if he had landed;—upon all these points, though perhaps much may remain to be done, yet certainly government is not without ample foundation of information upon this subject, which has been long since obtained, and which I hope is every day increasing. It is impossible but that considerations of this kind must have occurred to government formerly; for though the danger of invasion was never so imminent or so pressing in the last war as it is at present; though the enemy had not then so long an opportunity of fixing his attention to this one object, that is to say, the destruction of this country, without being dis-

* Colonel Crawford. † The Secretary at War.

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turbed by the danger of continental attack; though the scale of action which was found necessary at that period can be no criterion of the degree of preparation which is now necessary; yet even then it could not be supposed that his Majesty's ministers, in their general superintendence of the defensive means of the country, which was all that belonged to the civil servants of the crown, or that the illustrious personage who fortunately for the country then presided and now presides over the military department, that the variety of very able generals who had commands in the different districts of the kingdom, did not turn their most serious attention to a subject of such infinite importance as that of securing the kingdom against the possibility of foreign invasion, and to adopt such means as, with the force the country then possessed, would secure the defeat of any enterprise which might be attempted. There is hardly one military district in the kingdom, of which the government have not at this moment in its possession ample memorials, prepared a considerable time before the termination of the late war, under the auspices of the illustrious commander-in-chief of his Majesty's land-forces, containing a minute statement of the various points of resistance which are to be found on the coasts, and also all the intermediate points of military defence between the different coasts and the capital. Ministers, I know, have now in their possession similar reports with regard to those counties which contain the great naval arsenals of the kingdom. They have also memorials upon the very subject alluded to by the honourable gentleman *, that of protecting the mouths of our harbours, and particularly that of the mouth of the Humber; and, what I think of more importance still, though more remote, I mean the defence of Newcastle, which, from its connexion with the wants of the capital, is obviously of such importance that it cannot be necessary to enlarge upon it.

It is hardly necessary, Sir, to recall to the recollection of the house, the names of the gallant officers who had the commands of the different districts in the last war; but if I do state them, it

* Colonel Crawford.

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must be immediately seen that in such hands it was utterly impossible that the best means of providing for the national security should not have been maturely discussed and arranged. It will be recollected, that in the course of the last war we had the advantage of the talents of Sir Charles Grey, who commanded in the north. In the southern districts we had the advantage, at one period of the war at least, of all the suggestions of the Duke of Richmond; of whom, whatever differences of opinion may be entertained on some points, yet, with respect to the accuracy of his researches, the length of his experience, and to the extensiveness of his knowledge, there can be no difference of opinion. Besides these officers, we had General Dundas, who, from his situation, had the means of extending his views over all the districts. During a period of the war also, the Marquis Cornwallis had the command, besides many other very able officers, whom it is not now necessary to enumerate. Having the benefit of such assistance and distinguished military talents, it is impossible to suppose that we had not at that time a great mass of military information, and which must furnish ample and abundant foundation for the officers now employed to work upon: when we have all these means of information, I cannot suppose but that we must have also the means of bringing forward whatever may be considered as necessary to improve the defence of the country. I have already admitted, that although much has been done, still much material improvement may be ingrafted upon these plans which have been already procured. I hope and trust they will experience new improvements from day to day; that they will receive new forms and consistency; that ministers will not stop short until they have arranged a scheme of national safety that shall for ever set to rest the vaunts and threats of a foe whose ambition knows no limits, and whose spirit of insolence and aggression knows no end. There are many changes that may be made, there are many improvements that may be adopted at a proper period, but there are many of them such as I should not think it prudent to attempt, in the course of this contest, and at a time so pregnant with danger.

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I cannot here, Sir, avoid, for my own satisfaction, making a few observations upon some of the advantages which the army has received from the indefatigable attention of the illustrious person now at its head, combined with the measures which have been adopted by parliament: I think we may be said to have laid the foundation of means to obtain intelligent officers. We have laid the foundation of military education and instruction, not only for young men who may enter into that profession, but even for communicating information to men of long standing and high rank in the army, who, much to their honour, have eagerly availed themselves of this opportunity of perfecting their military education. The advantages arising from the military academies do not now rest on calculation or prediction; they have been felt and experienced; the study of a few months has made many officers almost proficients in the details of war: many officers who in Egypt gave the most splendid proof, not only of their courage, but also of their military skill, had the advantage only of a few months instruction in that military academy. We have, besides, laid the foundation of a great regular army: we have provided another most extensive force to support that army. I am ready to admit to the honourable officer*, that our regular army is not quite so great as we could wish in this country, but we have provided means for augmenting it to a degree much greater than was ever known in this country; and in addition to all this, we are now providing an immense irregular force, the advantages to be derived from which are admitted and confirmed by the honourable officer himself, being indeed too obvious to be disputed by any one. As far, therefore, as relates to the description and to the extent of our force, parliament has provided means, which to the honourable officer himself (cautious, honourably cautious, and anxious as he is for the safety of his country,) appear sufficient to place this country in a state of absolute safety. All this is undoubtedly matter of great consolation; but at the same time it will not justify us in diminishing our anxiety, or in relaxing our efforts, for its completion, because there must remain some interval before all

* Colonel Crawford.

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these plans are completely arranged and organized, and brought to that state of perfection at which I hope they will, however, soon arrive; but even supposing that all the measures which I have stated were brought to perfection, still it would not dispense us from the necessity of adopting other means of defence, particularly in two points of view. Suppose all the objects attained at this moment, yet the foundation of our security would not be these objects, however completely attained; against the arduous and most desperate struggle in which we may be engaged, all these kinds of strength can only give us this kind of security, that if we are not wanting to ourselves, if we have not forgotten our national character, but remember who we are, and what we are contending for, the contest will be glorious to us, and must terminate in the complete discomfiture of the enemy, and ultimate security to this kingdom: but if there remain any measure, by the adoption of which our safety may be yet rendered, not only more certain, perhaps, but more easy; by which our defence can be secured with less effusion of blood, less anxiety of mind, less interruption of the industry of the nation, less, I will not say of alarm, but of the evils, the inconveniencies, the agitation that necessarily belong to a great struggle of this kind, however short, or however certain its issue may be;—in a contest of such a nature it certainly would be most unwise to run any hazard of protracting it, or to neglect any means of shortening it still more, if possible: if, upon these grounds, I say, it can be pointed out to me that there are any means by which our regular army could be immediately increased and all our regiments completed, I should say that, although we are safe without it, yet our interest, our prosperity, and every object that can influence us, would require that such a measure should be adopted.

Much, however, as I should rejoice in seeing that object attained, and much as I am inclined to attend to the knowledge and experience of the honourable officer whose plan it was to take the militia at once into the regulars, I cannot bring my mind to concur in the idea which he has suggested for the attainment of that object; I cannot think of so deranging our immediate system of

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defence, if there were no other objections to it; I cannot think of breaking in upon the spirit of the militia as it now stands, for the purpose of transferring them into the regular army. I know that the privates in the militia feel, in common with the rest of their countrymen, the value of the sacred object for which they are to contend; that they are anxious to have an opportunity of shewing that they would not give place to any other troops in his Majesty's service in the ardour of their devotion to their country; but I know, at the same time, it is impossible to divest men of feelings and motives by which they have been long actuated, and I know that if a measure of this kind were adopted, from the partiality and affection which the officers bear towards the men whom they have trained, and have long had under their command, they would suffer much mutual regret in being separated. I should be sorry if there was one militia officer who did not feel proud in having his troops complete, and making his corps vie with the best disciplined troops in his Majesty's service. As such then are their feelings, in the same proportion must be their reluctance to see those men transferred from their officers into other regiments. I think I may venture to assert, that if you take a number of Englishmen under the command of proper officers, and with a proper degree of discipline, they must and will, especially when under the superintendence of regular generals, and mixed with regular troops, furnish for the present occasion a force so great, so respectable, and so useful, that it would be very unwise to hazard the making it less so, either by reducing their number, or by wounding their feelings; by making them think worse of themselves by your shewing that you thought worse of them; by making an invidious comparison between different kinds of troops; and by creating that worst of all feelings, a rivalship tinctured with animosity.

The honourable officer, however, not only wishes for this strong measure with regard to the militia, but calls upon the militia officers to do that which must naturally be highly repugnant to their inclinations, viz. to give their aid in transferring over to regiments of the line, those men on whose discipline they had bestow-

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ed so much pains: this is a sacrifice that can hardly be expected; but even if it could, there are other arguments against the adoption of this plan, the weight of which I am sure the honourable officer will upon reflection admit. In the first place, the danger is immediate, and the measure now proposed is one that must take up some time in its operation, and during that time the discipline of the corps must be necessarily loosened; and, therefore, I very much doubt whether, in such a pressing danger, the remedy suggested by the honourable gentleman could be with safety adopted. I confess that the measures which have lately been adopted by parliament, have in my mind taken off very much of the weight of the arguments which have been drawn from the necessity of augmenting the army of the line, by transferring the militia into it; because, means have already been taken for increasing the army of the line very considerably, by means less violent and less grating to the feelings of individuals than that now proposed. By placing a large proportion of the 40,000 men that are to be raised as the army of reserve in Great Britain, with regiments of the line, by permitting such of them as think proper, to enter into the regulars for general service, parliament certainly has done much to increase the regular army, and to preclude them from the necessity of adopting the rough and hazardous experiment which the honourable gentleman recommends. Undoubtedly, much will depend on the fullest use being made of the power which has been given to fill up regiments of the line, by means of the army of reserve.

I certainly feel, as I ought to do, great distrust of my own opinion upon military subjects, and I always state those opinions with great deference; but I believe that it is universally admitted by all officers, that new recruits poured into an old corps which has a number of experienced officers, will much sooner acquire a knowledge of discipline and become good soldiers, than they will if they are left in a corps by themselves, whatever pains may be taken in their instruction. Taking that as an established point, I was, therefore, surprized and disappointed when I heard my right honourable friend the secretary at war, instead of proposing to

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diffuse the 40,000 men of the army of reserve over the thirty-nine or forty battalions that are in England, in which case they would have all the advantages of all the officers of those old corps—instead of this he talks of dividing them among thirteen battalions, by which means all the advantage which they would derive from the instruction of a great number of old and experienced officers would be very much diminished. I know it may be said that the commissions in the army of reserve will in a great degree be filled up from the half-pay list, which certainly contains a great number of officers perfectly well qualified to instruct and discipline any men placed under their command. But in the first place, it must be recollected, that the half-pay list would not furnish any non-commissioned officers, who are certainly the most essential in training raw recruits: there is, however, another consideration which strikes my mind, and which I believe has not yet been suggested to the house. Our situation in point of security will certainly be improved by the adoption of the measure which is now before us: but it must be recollected, that while it improves, it alters our situation: if we had voted only the army of reserve, undoubtedly it might be filled with able and experienced officers from the half-pay list; but we must recollect, that in addition to the army of reserve, we have voted an army of between three and four hundred thousand men. That we shall have no difficulty in procuring the men who are to compose this force, I am perfectly satisfied, because the spirit of the country is now raised in the capital, and will from thence rapidly pervade all the extremities of the empire. That spirit was first kindled in the north, from thence it has extended to the metropolis, and is now catching from town to town, from village to village, and very shortly the whole kingdom will, I am convinced, manifest one scene of activity, of animation, and of energy, displaying in its native lustre the character of Englishmen. That the men, therefore, will be procured with the greatest facility, I have not the smallest doubt; but we shall then want the means of preparing and drilling them, with all the accuracy that the shortness of the

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time will admit, Does it not then occur to the house that we shall have infinitely more use for the services of officers not attached to regiments? Does it not occur to gentlemen, that, in addition to the noblemen, the gentry, and the yeomanry of the country, many of whom will serve as officers, it would be advisable, to every three or four officers of this description, to add one or two from the half-pay list? Would not the adoption of this plan greatly accelerate the training and perfecting of this new force? It therefore does appear most clearly to me, that by allowing a greater number of battalions of the line to receive the army of reserve, you would have a greater number of officers on the half-pay to discipline the irregular force.

I ought, Sir, to apologise for taking up so much of the time of the house upon this subject, but I conceive it to be the duty of every member to state to the house every idea which occurs to him, by which he thinks the general means of the defence of the country can be improved. I therefore certainly do applaud the honourable officer for having given us this night the general outlines of what he conceives to be the best plan that can at the present crisis be adopted for national defence. The opinions of an officer of so much experience are certainly entitled to great weight. There was not, I confess, Sir, any opinions delivered by the honourable officer which I heard with more pleasure than those which related to the propriety and practicability of having recourse to *field* fortification on the present occasion, of taking the necessary measures to secure our naval arsenals, not from capture, for that I apprehend has already been done, but to secure them from a bombardment, even from the greatest possible distance. Upon these points we have, as I before stated, the opinions of many able and experienced officers; and I trust that we should not for a moment be so far influenced by any feelings of false pride as to neglect or despise any means of this sort, that would so obviously add to our security; much less can I suppose that these means may be rejected from any mistaken ideas of economy, or rather of penury, for penury it

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would be indeed to run the hazard of a great waste of blood for the purpose of saving a few pounds and shillings. I therefore confidently hope that no feelings of this kind will interfere to prevent a great national object of this sort from being pursued and adopted.

There was another point advanced by the honourable officer, in which I am not sure that he was not misunderstood by my right honourable friend*, I mean that part of the honourable gentleman's speech in which he argued upon the propriety of erecting fortifications upon some parts of our coasts. I know very well, Sir, the common and general prejudice which prevails upon this subject; I know very well that when such a proposition is made, the answer will be, What, fortify the whole coast of England! will you build a wall round the whole island? No, Sir, that was not the proposition made by the honourable officer; no man in his senses could make such a proposition. He spoke only of the propriety of fortifying particular places which are peculiarly accessible, or the mouths of great rivers, such as the *Humber*: if I am right in my construction of what fell from the honourable officer, then I perfectly concur with him. I see the propriety, and even the necessity, of partial fortifications of this kind; and I believe he will agree with me in the suggestion I threw out of the propriety of erecting some additional works for the security of Newcastle. When the honourable officer talks of making certain points secure, he does not mean that they are to be placed in such an absolute state of security as to defy all kinds of attack, nor does he mean that there ought to be erected on the coasts one regular series of fortifications; he means, as I imagine, a judicious selection of given situations, the best calculated to prevent the landing of an enemy, or to prevent them from penetrating into the country after they had landed. It is an absurdity to suppose that fifty miles of coast require fifty miles of fortification. But if in that extent of coast there are but few points on which the enemy could land with security, those points ought to be fortified;

* The Secretary at War.

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while those points which were difficult of access, and in some degree fortified by nature, might be left untouched. The consequence of this would be, either that the landing of the enemy would be obstructed, or else he would be compelled to land at an inconvenient and disadvantageous place. This certainly would be obtaining a great deal: and, though I pretend to very little knowledge upon the subject, I believe that in many instances it would not be necessary to erect great fortifications; it would be sufficient to profit by the natural advantages of the situation. There are in many parts of England, valleys with large rivulets flowing through them: these I apprehend might be inundated so as to separate two corps of an enemy's army, or to prevent communication between them. I really beg pardon, Sir, for talking upon a subject upon which I know so little, but I think that for a very small expense a great extent of the coast might be put into such a situation of defence as I have described; and then, instead of being obliged to look to such an immense extent of coast, your attention would be narrowed and your force concentrated. If you are obliged at once to look to the whole extent of your coast, the consequence must either be that your army must be collected in some central position, equally distant from all parts of the coast, and in that case some time must elapse after our enemy land, before you can bring your army to meet him; or else you must fritter away your army in small divisions along the whole line of coast. But by the adoption of the plan of the honourable officer, at least as I understand it, you would be able in the first instance to oppose the landing of the enemy, and, if he should effect a landing, be able to meet him immediately. This system of fortification is one that is not liable to that foolish, though common objection, that it would be building a wall round the island. It would diminish much of the danger with which we are threatened; for while on the one hand the people of England are desirous not to be spared in a necessary contest, we on the other hand ought to shew every desire not to make an unnecessary use of that courage which we applaud and admire,

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but which we should manage and spare by every precaution that human foresight can inspire.

The third object to which the honourable officer alluded, was that of employing fortification on the lines of internal defence. This rests upon a principle so plain, that though it requires military knowledge to state it distinctly, yet it only requires the plainest common sense to see the advantage that must result from it; it is as clear as any demonstration in mathematics.

If then this plan does promise such advantages, I am sure I shall not hear any objections started on the ground of expense. I would not enlarge any more upon this subject, if it were not for something that fell from my right honourable friend, upon the fourth point suggested by the honourable officer. I know very well that the manly feelings, and, if I may say so, the obstinate courage, of my right honourable friend, will not let him believe that the French would offer us such an insult as to come over here to fight us for our capital. I am sure I shall not be suspected of depreciating or of not placing due confidence in the army, in the navy, or in the courage of the people of England; on the contrary, I am firmly convinced that the enemy will find us to be invincible. But it must be admitted, that in war there are accidents depending sometimes upon a day or an hour, in which, with the bravest and most numerous army, the enemy, by hazarding an operation for which in any other service a general would be broke or shot, but which a French general would attempt, because he knows he would be broke or shot if he did not, might obtain an advantage, the consequences of which might be most serious if some such measure as that recommended by the honourable officer was not adopted. We unfortunately know that attempts of this kind may be made, however rash or desperate, for those who will make them know that they will not appear so to Buonaparte. The proud despot of France will, however, have reason to tremble on his usurped throne, when the people of France find that they have sacrificed hundreds of thousands of men to gratify his ambition and his revenge. With respect to that despot himself, he would, I am

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sure, feel as little hesitation in sacrificing 100,000 Frenchmen, as he would millions of Englishmen if he had them within his grasp.

In arranging therefore the plan of national defence, we ought not to estimate upon probabilities merely. It is not enough for us to say that if he is eccentric and mad, he will pay the price of his madness and folly; we must take care that we do not pay for it first; we must not now disdain to adopt precautions which were formerly thought unnecessary. I cannot therefore agree with the short and decisive opinion of my right honourable friend, who, when the honourable officer recommended it to government to fortify London, replied, "I say, do not fortify it." I must enter my protest against such language. He says, he would not affront the people of England by supposing, that, while they have 80,000 seamen on-board their fleet, and have such an army as is now on foot, it could be necessary to fortify the capital. Why, Sir, in the first place as to the navy, we must remember, that although we have 80,000 seamen, a great part of them are detached on service to different quarters of the world, and consequently could not in any degree prevent an invasion at home. I am certainly not denying that the enemy would find great difficulty and danger in transporting his army to this country, but it is by running desperate risks that he can alone hope for success. We may have a proud navy of ships of the line and frigates — I will not now stop to enquire whether that navy might not have been in readiness sooner—but I can conceive a case in which ships of that kind would not be sufficient to meet an innumerable flotilla of boats issuing from all the ports, harbours, and creeks, on the opposite coast of France, and covering the channel for several miles in length. Whether, in order to meet a force of this kind, it would not be wise to multiply the smaller sort of our naval force, and to mount them with guns of heavy metal and with carronades, I do not know; I hope something of this kind has been done already. It is admitted indeed, that our navy, great and powerful as it is, cannot be relied on with absolute certainty to prevent an inva-

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sion; because if it could, there would be no occasion for all the precautions which we are adopting.

But it is said, we ought not to fortify London because our ancestors did not fortify it. Why, Sir, that is no argument, unless you can shew me that our ancestors were in the same situation that we are. Look back to the days when the genius, the wisdom, and the fortitude of Elizabeth, defeated the proud and invincible Armada, fitted out by Spain to conquer us—and I trust that the invincible battalion from France will meet with the same fate;—we must admit that not only the situation of this country, but of all Europe, is changed; and it is absurd to say, that when the circumstances are changed, the means of defence should be precisely the same. We might as well be told that, because our ancestors fought with arrows and with lances, we ought to use them now, and that we ought to consider shields and corslets as affording a secure defence against musketry and artillery. It is however a very great historical mistake to say that our ancestors in England, and particularly in Ireland, had not fortifications much more numerous than any it is now proposed to erect. If then the fortification of the capital can add to the reasonable security of the country, I think it ought to be done. But here again I do not understand the honourable officer to mean that London should be encompassed with a regular fortification, but only that proper use should be made of the natural advantages of defence, which it possesses in a greater degree than any capital in Europe. The only difference of opinion that can exist upon this subject, must proceed from gentlemen imagining that we are recommending the erection of great regular fortifications; there is a great difference between regular fortifications and *field* works, such as now recommended: we do not want regular fortresses capable of standing a regular siege, like Lisle or Tournay. But if by the erection of works such as I am recommending, you can delay the progress of the enemy for three days, it may make the difference between the safety and the destruction of the capital. It will not, I admit, make a difference between the conquest and the independence of the country, for that will

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not depend upon one nor upon ten battles; but it may make the difference between the loss of thousands of lives, with misery, havoc, and desolation, spread over the country on the one hand —or on the other, of frustrating the efforts of confounding the exertions, and of chastising the insolence of the enemy.

If then I am right in my general view of this subject, the expense and the time of constructing these works are so diminished, that, late as it is, there is nothing that ought to prevent us from now making the attempt. I do not on such a subject as this rely upon my own opinion alone, but upon the opinions of officers high in the confidence of the present government. It is well known that in the course of last war this system was minutely contemplated, that a detailed plan was prepared, resembling in many particulars the plan recommended by the honourable officer. A plan was, I say, completely digested, a survey taken, and the works actually traced by that great and able officer, General Dundas. This plan is not therefore new to military men, it is not new to the King's councils, it is not founded upon any want of confidence in our army, our navy, or ourselves; it does not arise from any apprehensions of the enemy, but it is founded upon this principle—that while we set no limits to the exertions of the people, we ought to omit no opportunity of diminishing their danger and shortening the contest, of making its continuance less perilous, and of preventing that havoc, devastation, and misery, which must attend a lengthened contest, even though it may end most successfully for this country.

Englishmen must look to this as a species of contest from which, by the extraordinary favour of Divine Providence, we have been for a long series of years exempted. If we are now at length called upon to take our share in it, we must meet it with just gratitude for the exemptions we have hitherto enjoyed, and with a firm determination to support it with courage and resolution; we must shew ourselves worthy, by our conduct on this occasion, of the happiness which we have hitherto enjoyed, and which, by the blessing of God, I hope we shall

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continue to enjoy. We ought to have a due sense of the magnitude of the danger with which we are threatened; we ought to meet it in that temper of mind which produces just confidence, which neither despises nor dreads the enemy; and while on the one hand we accurately estimate the danger with which we are threatened at this awful crisis, we must recollect on the other hand what it is we have at stake, what it is we have to contend for. It is for our property, it is for our liberty, it is for our independence, nay, for our existence as a nation; it is for our character, it is for our very name as Englishmen, it is for every thing dear and valuable to man on this side of the grave. Parliament has now provided ample means for our defence; it remains for the executive government to employ them to the best advantage. The regular army must be augmented to that point to which the means are now given to raise it; the militia must be kept high in numbers, and unbroken in spirit; the auxiliary force must be as promptly raised and disciplined as the nature of things will admit; nothing must be omitted that military skill can suggest to render the contest certain as to its success, and short in its duration. If government shew the same determination to apply all those means that parliament has shewn in providing them; if the people follow up the example which the legislature has set them, we are safe. Then I may say, without being too sanguine, that the result of this great contest will ensure the permanent security, the eternal glory of this country; that it will terminate in the confusion, the dismay, and the shame, of our vaunting enemy; that it will afford the means of animating the spirits, of rousing the courage, of breaking the lethargy, of the surrounding nations of Europe; and I trust, that if a fugitive French army should reach its own shores after being driven from our coasts, it will find the people of Europe reviving in spirits, and anxious to retaliate upon France all the wrongs, all the oppressions, they have suffered from her; and that we shall at length see that wicked fabric destroyed which was raised upon the prostitution of liberty, and which has caused more miseries, more horrors to France and to

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the surrounding nations, than are to be paralleled in any part of the annals of mankind.

The question passed *nemine contradicente*.

February 27, 1804.

On a motion for the second reading of the Volunteer Regulation bill, Mr. Pitt addressed the House as follows:

Sir—From the opinion of the right honourable secretary of state, that this discussion should be confined within narrow limits, and should apply solely to the consideration of the measure immediately before the house, I decidedly differ; and with the sentiments of my right honourable friend* on the lower bench, that we are now called upon to take into view every thing connected with the national defence, I entirely concur. Although the volunteer system naturally forms the first subject for our deliberation, as it is the principal feature in the picture, and that upon which we must, under all the circumstances, ground our reliance for ultimate security, yet the army, the militia, and all the other branches of our public force press upon our attention, and require to be examined upon the present occasion.

Whether the volunteer system be radically wrong, or inadequate to its object, is not the question proper for the house now to consider; but how far any defects, which experience has rendered manifest in its original formation, may be removed, and how the detail of the measure may be improved; how far, in a word, it may be rendered efficient—this, in my judgment, is the turn which the debate should take. With a sense of the situation in which the country is placed, of the danger which has been so long suspended over us, and of the crisis which, according to all appearances and information, is so rapidly approaching, we should devote ourselves to the consideration of the best means of amending and advancing to perfection the only force of equal

* Mr. Windham.

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magnitude now within our reach; to devise, not only how this force is to be prepared for the first approach of the danger which menaces us, but how its spirit and efficacy may be preserved and made competent to meet the full extent of the danger, and effectually to guard the country.

That the enthusiasm which may enable men to meet the first attack, can last long, it might be permitted to hope; but that it would, no rational man would be very sanguine in calculating upon. It becomes, therefore, necessary to communicate to the volunteers every instruction that is practicable, in order to assimilate them to a regular army. That it is impossible fairly to investigate the nature and tendency of the volunteer system, without referring to the regular army and militia, I readily admit, and that it is proper to enquire how far any farther augmentations of the one or the other is practicable or desirable; also how far the volunteer system interferes with either of these objects. But these are topics upon which I shall trouble the house by-and-by. At present I wish, principally, to dwell upon the methods to be resorted to, in order to communicate to the volunteers all the instruction they want, and to the system all the improvement of which it may be susceptible; for I am certain that this must form the great basis of our strength, the important instrument of our defence, the medium by which we must contrive to bring the country safely out of its dangers, and to lay asleep those apprehensions, which, from the calamitous destinies of the present times, have been excited by a gigantic power suddenly erected, to disturb the world, to desolate a large portion of Europe, and to lay the foundation, if not resolutely and vigorously resisted, of future and incalculable misery. Such resistance it is become the fate of this country to make, and I trust it will be its glory effectually to accomplish. That its resources and the zeal of the people are competent to the undertaking and the achievement, no man can doubt;—that zeal which has been displayed in a manner so extraordinary as to surprise even the most ardent admirers of the British character, and to gratify the most anxious friends of British independence; that zeal which has not merely seconded

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but far outrun the wants of the country, and very much indeed the wishes of the government.

Into the principle of the system, upon which the force produced by this zeal has been constructed, I shall not now inquire. That is a point which has been already amply discussed and satisfactorily settled. The question fairly is, whether, in addition to our regular army and militia, it is practicable to procure, from the population of the country, a force sufficiently large to meet the magnitude of the dangers which threaten us, by any other and better means? It does not appear to me that we could. Certainly, as to the amount of the force, an equal number could not be collected by any other than compulsory means; and if the volunteer plan were abandoned, those means, however obnoxious, must have been resorted to, or the security of the country would have been very precarious. From those considerations I approved of the volunteer system. At all events, whatever the imperfections of that system may be, I feel that I cannot be contradicted, in the assertion that no other can be now looked to as a substitute. The thing cannot be done away. The danger is too near and imminent to allow of a total change. It is the system to which we must resort to meet the present difficulty; and I will go further and say, that it is that, if carried to the degree of perfection of which it is capable, upon which we might calculate, in combination with other descriptions of ordinary force, for the future and permanent security of the empire.

But, whether this system may or may not be brought to that state of discipline which seems necessary to reconcile my right honourable friend* to its existence, I contend that this is not the time to think of removing it altogether, of treading back the steps we have taken, of providing another force at a time when the danger is at our gates—when, as one might say, we are within gun-shot of the enemy. This, surely then, is not the moment to entertain such a proposition; and if not, the improvement of the system that is established is, of course, the object for our deliberation. Whatever differences of opinion, therefore, may

* Mr. Windham.

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prevail between the right honourable gentleman * on the opposite bench, or my right honourable friend † on the bench below him and myself, I must naturally expect from them, that they will not differ with me on this point, whatever they may wish to do at a future period,—that, when we are in expectation of an immediate attack from the enemy—when the danger is announced from the highest authority to be close upon us, and when we are about to encounter a tremendous storm raised by a power the most gigantic perhaps the world has ever seen,—when we are threatened by an attempt on our liberty and existence, dictated by slavish power and inordinate ambition, it behoves us to consult our immediate security, and not to allow of even the idea of disbanding so large a body as 400,000 men, however imperfectly constructed they may be. We should rather examine how far this force may be rendered effective; and, with this view, I shall state to the house the mode that, in my judgment, ought to be pursued.

How far ministers have failed, heretofore, in the performance of their duty with respect to the volunteers; how far they have wished to carry into complete execution the system of which they appear to approve, I will not now stop to inquire, farther than to say, that they should have been more attentive to promote the regulation of the several volunteer corps. They should have communicated more precise instructions, through the medium of the lord-lieutenants of counties, as to the best method of training the volunteers, of procuring a regular attendance at drills, and enforcing attention to discipline when there. These are points of arrangement very material to consider, and ministers should even now, and I hope it is not too late, look to objects of so much consequence. I do not mean that any superfluous directions should be given to the volunteers, nor do I ask to have them trained up in the way in which the advocates of an armed peasantry would recommend, who seem to imagine that such peasantry could be converted into that quality of force, namely, light troops, for which, of all others, they are least qualified. But I would have

* Mr. Fox. † Mr. Windham.

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the volunteers instructed in all the necessary evolutions; and this I am decidedly of opinion, would be far the best course to pursue, particularly as it must be admitted, that, under existing circumstances, it would be quite absurd, if not dangerous, to think of proposing a new system to supersede that of the volunteers. To promote this improvement in the discipline of the volunteers, is a thing so obviously necessary, and so highly desirable, that I should hope no minor difficulties will be allowed to stand in the way, that no mistaken or narrow notions of economy will operate to impede such an important object, but that the volunteer force will be rendered as perfect in military discipline, as the nature of the institution, the peculiar character of its members, and the proximity of our dangers will admit.

When I speak of the dangers of the country, I do not mean it to be understood, although I think the system of our defence has made a progress far short of what it might and ought to have done, that even with our volunteer force, so imperfectly instructed as they are, with our other resources, I should feel any dread for the result of meeting with the most formidable attack the enemy can possibly contrive to make; but yet I feel that the house will not have performed its duty if, after the solemn warning it has received from ministers themselves of the near approach of the enemy, any thing that can be done shall by any possibility be neglected; that any contrivance shall be overlooked which can at all enable us to contend, I will say collectively and individually, with the powerful and inveterate enemy that disturbs us, and to contend with such effect as not only to accomplish his final discomfiture, but to convince him and his infatuated adherents, that any attempt to invade and subjugate England can only originate in the wildest ambition, and must terminate in disgrace and ruin to the army that has the hardihood to venture it. We must make such efforts as to fix a lasting impression, not only on the enemy himself, but on the rest of Europe, that the man who, led on by confidence, shall dare to attempt the subjection of England, shall meet the fate that the pride and courage of Englishmen, animated by a just estimate of

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their liberty and other advantages, must ever prepare for any invading foe. We must leave in this contest such an example to our posterity, as shall be honourable to ourselves and conducive to their security. We must not look alone to our defence against danger. Much more important consequences must be achieved. As to the extent of time which the contest is likely to occupy, should the enemy succeed in making good a landing in any considerable force, no man can pretend to say positively; but it is the peculiar duty of parliament and government to provide for every event. It will not be enough that such provision should enable us to come victorious out of our contest with the enemy; our triumph must be signal and decisive. We must resist the enemy at every foot of his progress; but we must take every care that no unnecessary sacrifices shall be made, that the blood of our countrymen shall, on every possible occasion, be spared. To these points it is our imperative duty to attend; for, surely, if ever there was a great trust confided to the liberality and justice of parliament, it is the means of protecting the lives and blood of their fellow-citizens, who have rushed forward to the post of danger when the safety of their country was menaced. We should not consent to purchase our security by the sacrifice of our countrymen, if such a sacrifice could at all be avoided.

From these considerations, I conjure the house to point their attention particularly to the consideration of the means of rendering the volunteer force as efficient as possible. That much yet remains to be done, and for which this bill does not provide, I feel the most perfect conviction; and although I am of opinion that it would be better the alterations in detail, which I think necessary, should originate with his Majesty's ministers, who are best qualified to give complete effect to such alterations; yet my sense of duty will not suffer me to neglect the propositions which appear to me eligible. To these propositions I shall strictly confine myself, and, abstaining from all allusions to whatever I may think on the present state of politics, or to the conduct of ministers hitherto, I shall apply myself solely to the examination

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of our national defence. That appears to me to be the first and most interesting subject. It ought to occupy the attention of every man. It is quite enough to fill the minds of all.

This, therefore, claiming my consideration in preference to every other subject, I look with great concern to the imperfections of the volunteer system, recollecting that it is pushed to an extent far beyond any thing that was foreseen when the country was first declared in danger; and, considering its present magnitude, I regret to find that it is not more advanced in military quality, that it is still extremely inadequate to its object, and that the proper means of promoting its discipline have not been as yet adopted. These means, which I deem most material, I conceive to be, 1st, the opportunity of regular instructions; 2dly, the securing of attendance at drill; and, 3dly, the enforcing of silence, steadiness, &c. when at drill.

On the first of these points, I beg to ask of any thinking man, whether it is possible for the volunteer to acquire a sufficient knowledge of the simplest part of military discipline by attending drill only twenty days in a year, and, generally, not more than two or three hours each day—particularly taking into account the inadequacy of the instructions, &c. I am aware that these arguments may be said to offer objections to the system altogether; but these objections I feel to be removable by attending to the alterations I have suggested, and shall hereafter propose. What may be done at a future time I shall not now enter into, but merely confine myself to the manner in which they should make the best use of their time that yet remains to prepare them for the impending danger; and this preparation should be stimulated and encouraged by the conduct of parliament. The spirit of our gallant volunteers, so long tried by suspense, may be otherwise relaxed. Danger being so often menaced, and so long suspended, their zeal may be weakened, unless parliament shall do its duty by giving to those valiant patriots every possible means of rendering their exertions in the cause of their country completely effectual. This done, and your views fully explained, I am persuaded that the volunteers will accede to any proposal

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that the necessity of the case may suggest. Such is the nature of the minds of Englishmen, that I have not the shadow of doubt, that there is no difficulty which they would not encounter, and no privation to which they would not submit, when they shall understand that such difficulties and privations are necessary to succeed in the glorious cause committed to their charge, of rescuing their country from danger, and establishing the security of their countrymen.

In order then to promote the efficiency which I have in view, I would propose, that the volunteer corps should be encouraged to go on permanent duty, suppose for a week, or two, or three, as was the case last summer in particular districts on the coast, always taking care to assemble the corps in the place convenient to their native home. For this purpose, I should propose that a small bounty be given to each volunteer who would consent to march on such permanent duty, namely, seven shillings per week, independently of one shilling per day to every volunteer who should so march. This plan would, I am persuaded, do more towards promoting discipline and military habits among the men, than any drilling at different and detached periods. I had an opportunity of witnessing the salutary effects of such a system last summer. About 2 or 300,000*l.* would be quite sufficient to defray the expense of it. Surely it cannot be pretended that parliament manage with judgment and integrity the purse of their constituents, if they refuse to open it in order to advance this sum for a purpose of such high importance, to save the lives and property of the people, and to bring the contest in which we are engaged to a speedy and glorious conclusion.

Now, as to the mode of instructing the volunteer corps, I mentioned before Christmas very fully the propriety of appointing field-officers, &c. to such battalions as applied for them, and I am still of the same opinion; as none of the arguments which have been advanced against my recommendation appear to me to have any weight, and as I know, from my own observation, the advantages that would result from it. I would propose that the instruction of volunteer corps should be assisted by the re-

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gular officers stationed in the several districts, particularly those on the coast, on some parts of which no less than from 80 to 100,000 men might be speedily collected. I would also recommend the adoption of some system, not harsh, to enforce attendance at drill, which is particularly necessary. This might be done by regulations, to which each man might subscribe, imposing fines on defaulters, rendering the inattention at parades liable to arrest and detention, until tried before a magistrate, who should have the power of commuting any fine for a short imprisonment of two or three days. I agree with the right honourable mover, that no change should be made in the volunteer regulations that is not called for by absolute necessity, and of such a nature do I conceive the proposition I have submitted; so I believe almost every man who has witnessed their parades must confess; and when the cause and object of this change should be explained to the volunteers themselves, I am satisfied none of them would be found to murmur, much less to resign, particularly when such communication should be accompanied by the intimation contained in this bill, that they might resign if they did not think proper to remain on such conditions.

As to the right of volunteers to recommend their officers, about which so much has been said, it strikes me that there is no material difference upon that point, if gentlemen would endeavour truly to understand it. While a control was acknowledged to exist in the commanding officer of each corps, in the lord-lieutenants of counties, and finally in ministers, the claim was frivolous to insist upon; and yet it would be dangerous to concede it, even in appearance. I have at the same time a wish and a hope, that a commanding officer will, upon occasion of any vacancy, consult with temper the sentiments of the corps, but not in any thing like the forms of a popular election, to take their individual suffrages.

Here Mr. Pitt entered into a comprehensive review of the progress of the regular army and militia since the commencement of the war, and contended that neither the recruiting of the one, nor the balloting of the other, was so much impeded

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by the increase of the volunteers as some gentlemen seemed anxious to impress on the minds of the house; while he thought, on the contrary, that the volunteer system would, by proper modifications, tend to the regular maintenance and progressive augmentation of our public force. The complained-of slowness in the ballot for the army of reserve and militia might be easily accounted for, from the circumstance of the great number to be balloted for in the first year of the war; and this, independently of the volunteer system, was sufficient to produce a considerable difficulty in recruiting for the army. To provide a resource to recruit the regular army he would propose that a system, somewhat modelled on the principle of the army of reserve, should be kept up, and that from that body any that should volunteer for general service should be supplied by fresh ballot. One reason for this plan was, that the army should not altogether depend on the contingency of an ordinary recruiting; and another, that the militia should be held sacred, and that no volunteers for general service should be sought for from that body in future. The proportion between this army of reserve and the militia to be fixed, and that the militia should be gradually reduced from its present establishment to its old standard, and that, according as vacancies may occur in that body, a ballot should take place for an equal number, not to fill up such vacancies, but to go to the army of reserve. Thus, as the one body was reduced, the other would be augmented, that the change having a gradual operation would not be likely to produce confusion in any branch of our public force.

He was aware, however, that this proposed change would incur some unpopularity, and some pressure on the parishes; but to this he would say, that such pressure ought to be softened, if a remedy could be found, and, if it could not be remedied, it ought to be endured. To this he had no doubt the people would submit cheerfully, when they reflected on the value of the object for which they had to contend, and that nothing could diminish their devout gratitude to Providence upon a comparison of their situations with those countries which, neglecting timely precau-

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tion, and refusing perhaps to suffer small losses in the first instance, committed themselves to the will of that power which now employed all its resources to assail this country. He particularly urged the introduction of a plan to limit the bounties to be given to substitutes, that it should be always less than that to recruits for the regular army; the bounties to which also should be limited, in order to put a stop to the proceedings of those pests of society called crimps. He thought it would be wise to allot a certain number of regiments to be recruited in certain counties; and that the recruiting officers should be stationary in such counties. Thus, he conceived, the recruits would be more easily obtained, through the connexion that would grow up between the people, the recruiting officers, and the regiments to which they might belong; and the consequence of the system would produce an *esprit de corps* that would be highly advantageous.

Mr. Pitt took notice of the propriety of attending somewhat more to the system of fortifications, and also improving our naval defence, which he stated from his own knowledge to be very defective. While our danger was greater, and our resources also, than at any former period, he complained that our state of naval preparation was much lower. He declared, that in this statement he was not influenced by the slightest prejudice against any man; on the contrary, in the whole of his observations he wished to keep aloof from every description of asperity, which he thought ought not, upon any account, to be introduced in the course of this discussion. This was not a time for the operation of any party spirit. Every mind should be engaged, every heart should be devoted to the consideration of the public defence; and in the prosecution of it he hoped that ministers would weigh well the sacred duty they had to perform, the awful responsibility of their situation. It would not be enough for them to say that our preparations were great—they ought to be complete. He might be told that the danger was not so great as he imagined, and that the state of our preparations was much greater: perhaps such was the fact; but he spoke the sentiments

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which all appearances, among which were the declarations of ministers themselves, fully justified.

He concluded with stating that he had many other observations to make on the several projects he had mentioned, but should wave them till a future opportunity. In the mean time he declared that he was not so obstinately attached to any opinion of his own as to decline, upon such an important subject, giving the utmost attention to the suggestion of others.

The bill was read a second time, and committed.

March 15, 1804.

MR. PITT this day brought forward his promised motion on the present state of the naval defence of the country.

In introducing the subject to the House, he spoke to the following purport: —

Sir—As I have reason to believe that a part, and I must confess a very important part, of the information which it is my wish the house should be in possession of, with respect to the state and means of our naval defence, is not likely to meet with any opposition on the part of his Majesty's ministers, I shall not detain the time of the house with any details or observations which do not apply, as closely as possible, to the papers which constitute the object of my inquiry. I shall, therefore, state generally the grounds and ends of the different motions I have to bring forward, but I beg leave to add, that if they are, as it will appear to me, unexpectedly objected to, I shall claim the indulgence of the house in explaining more fully, and calling their attention to the importance of the information in detail, which I conceive essentially necessary to the safety of the country.

The object of the first motion I shall have the honour of making, will be an humble address to his Majesty, " That he may be pleased to give directions to have laid before the house,

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an account of the number of ships of the line, ships of 50 guns, frigates, sloops of war, bombs, hired armed vessels, &c. in commission on the 31st of December 1793, on the 30th of September 1801, and on the 31st of December 1803, specifying the service in which they were respectively employed." Gentlemen will perceive that this motion calls for the production of papers, distinguishing what is absolutely necessary for their information, the state of three different periods, in which the naval means of the country's defence were called into action. When the question is properly considered, with respect to the necessity of making great preparations, in order to meet with vigour and efficacy those carrying on by the enemy, and openly avowed to be intended against the existence of this nation, I believe it will be found that the number of that description of our naval force, fit to repel the actual attempts of the enemy, is at the present moment much inferior, and less adequate to the exigency of the danger, than at any period in former times. Shall I, Sir, detain the house with a tedious recital of the great and extraordinary changes which have taken place, and which call for increased activity and exertion? Such an appeal is rendered unnecessary by the actual state of things, and by facts which cannot be controverted. If, on former occasions, we have been called upon to make preparations of defence in their magnitude superior to preceding cases, it does not require from me any arguments to convince the house, that, in our present situation, our means of security should be much greater in a comparative point of view, and that, in proportion as we are threatened, not only with the acknowledged determination of the enemy, but with his increased power of effecting an invasion, we should redouble our efforts, and be ready to guard against every possible risk which may be hazarded against our independence and happiness.

The next point to which I shall beg leave to call the attention of the house, is that species of naval force which is best calculated to meet and defeat that preparing by the enemy, to accomplish the great and favourite object of invasion. I believe

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that at the commencement of the last year, it occurred to the lords of the admiralty, that the kind of force best calculated to act against the attempts which might be made to effect a descent, was that more peculiarly fitted to display itself in shoal water, and I have good grounds to believe, that the lords of the admiralty, thinking so, were of opinion that it ought to be considerably augmented. But although they were of that opinion in the month of January 1803, yet I can state to the house without the fear of contradiction, that only twenty-three gun-vessels were provided for, as an augmentation to this species of naval force, five of which were to be completed in three, and the remainder in six months. I mean, Sir, that this provision against invasion was undertaken to be carried into effect in the month of January 1804. Yet of all the vessels likely to be employed with success, this craft was, of all others, the most eligible, whether its means of defence and annoyance are to be considered, or the water on which it is destined to act. The lords of the admiralty, convinced, however, of the necessity of employing it, took some measures for an establishment of that nature; and I am naturally led to inquire into the steps which they pursued to complete so desirable an object. They determined to have five gun-boats ready in three months, and the whole, constituting twenty-three, finished for actual service in six months. It is undoubtedly a very material point to enquire why this augmentation was not thought of at an earlier period. Am I, Sir, to recapitulate the various motives which should have accelerated increased exertion? Were I to do so, I should merely restate what has been obvious to every man of common sense and common observation. In the month of August, when we saw the necessity of augmented efforts; when we saw transports for the conveyance of troops collecting daily in the port of Boulogne; when we saw them gaining new strength and new additions, during the fine weather, to the months of November and December, and when we knew that they had increased to upwards of 1000 in the same port, independent of the armaments in Helvoet, in the Texel, in Brest, and other points of

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attack; what reason, let me ask, can be assigned for the gross neglect which has taken place in this respect? But above all, Sir, let me ask what defence can be set up for this extraordinary conduct, when we were told by government itself, that we were threatened with invasion from day to day; when we had, if I am not very much misinformed, reason to believe that 100 strong gun-boats were collected at Boulogne ready to convoy and protect the enemy's flotilla assembled in that same port?

In stating all these circumstances, it is hardly necessary for me, I think, to apply them to the subject under our discussion. Having, as I have observed, all these proofs before us, I wish to know, and I trust I shall not be considered as asking too much, why we can have but a force to meet the enemy in his own way, a part of which is to be ready only in three months, and the remainder, the greater part, to be completed in not less than six? If we have been preparing for a considerable time, with all the efforts of which the country is capable, an immense land force; if government be serious in the notice which it has given, and in the alarm which it has diffused, of the attack that menaces our independence and even our existence; if we are now ready to contend on our native soil with an enemy waiting for a favourable moment to make a descent in that class of vessels peculiarly adapted to cross the Channel, I hope I shall not be thought unreasonable in asking, why the best and most effectual means of meeting and triumphing over the danger have been so long suspended; and why a part of our counteracting exertions, in the naval department of our strength has been deferred for three months, and the more considerable part has been postponed for the space of six months? This will constitute the object of the second motion, with which I shall trouble the house.

I shall not, thinking as I do, that it would be an unprofitable waste of time, undertake to shew that the means of our national defence, with respect to the use of gun-boats, have been improperly used; and that when it was found necessary to resort to them, they were only attempted too late to be effectual,

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I have now to state what has been done in the course of the last war, when the occasion was less pressing, and the circumstances were, under every point of view, of a less imperious nature; and I have to assure the house that if the proper documents be granted, I shall undertake to prove the truth of the assertions, which I may feel it my duty to bring forward. Gentlemen will, no doubt, recollect, that in 1794, 1797, and 1801, it was found necessary to augment the same species of naval force, to which I have this evening alluded. What was the conduct of government at each of these periods? A considerable number of gun-boats was got ready in the two first periods, within ten weeks only; and the same activity of preparation was carried on with success in the year 1801, within the space of from twelve to fourteen weeks. Instead of any exertion now, similar to those instances which I have mentioned, we are informed, that the greater part of our means of defence is to be completed within six months, and that a few gun-boats will be ready at the end of three.

Thus, Sir, I am warranted in maintaining that here we have sufficient grounds for a motion to address his Majesty, that he might be graciously pleased to use additional vigour and expedition in preparing and maturing our naval means of defence against the enemy's armaments; for employing redoubled activity against the danger with which we are threatened; and for guarding the narrow seas with more strictness and vigilance. These, it will not be denied, are objects of true constitutional inquiry, and they form a most satisfactory ground for me to demand the information which I desire may be laid before this house.

In the like manner I also propose, "that an humble address be presented to his Majesty, for a copy of the contracts made, and the orders given, by the lords of the admiralty, in 1793, 1797, and 1803, with respect to the number of gun-vessels to be built, distinguishing the time at which each contract was made, the period in which it was to be brought to a conclusion, and the amount of the sum to be paid for the performance of it." These accounts are the more important and material, as they will give

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to the house the opportunity of not only seeing the opinion of the lords of the admiralty on the subject, but they will also afford the means of comparing our naval strength in this respect, as it actually exists, with what it was in former instances, and tend most essentially to promote that end for which we cannot be too zealous in our wishes — the security of the country. It is not for me to anticipate the opinion of gentlemen upon these questions; but most certainly no man will undertake to tell me, that this is not a proper mode for satisfying the house, whether the preparations which have been made by his Majesty's ministers, in the direction of naval affairs, have been commensurate to the magnitude of the crisis in which we are placed. As the measures I have thought proper to touch upon, are decisively necessary for the defence of the country, I will not fatigue the house with dwelling on them at a length that must be uninstructive and tedious. There is, I am confident, no man who hears me, that is not convinced of the vast importance of these objects, which are superior in magnitude to any that can occupy our attention. They can receive no embellishment or illustration from any words which it is in my power to use, for they press themselves irresistibly on the minds of all.

Another object to which I shall call the attention of the house is, however remote it may appear to some, not less essential to the permanent security and happiness of the country. I mean, Sir, not what relates to our present danger, and our actual exertions, but to what should be our system of conduct, even were peace to be concluded, with respect to any future war. It is a consideration, let me say, in which not only our own dearest interests, but the interests and destiny of Europe, are involved. Next to the two first points which I have noticed, it remains with the house to determine whether the state of our navy, at the commencement of the war, was such as to call for augmentation, or diminution. In the year 1801, it was impossible to suppose that the navy did not require more exertion than in 1793; for every thing indicated that it was not so promising as in the beginning of the former war. I have no desire to

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disclose the precise condition of our present force, but the truth is, that you were bound to make every possible exertion, and even efforts altogether unprecedented, to augment and repair your navy at the beginning of the present war, from motives and causes which did not exist in the commencement of the former war. It is almost needless for me, Sir, to remark, that there are two modes of increasing our naval strength, with respect to our shipping; the one by building vessels in the king's yards, the other by building them in consequence of private contracts in the merchants' yards. If we look to the progress of our naval improvement for a very long time, we shall find that no less than two-thirds of it have been built in the merchants' yards; and, undoubtedly, it is not necessary for me to state to the house that which must be known to every person conversant with the subject, that building in the king's yards in time of war is nearly suspended altogether. I have also to remark, what I am convinced will not escape the attention of gentlemen, that the great augmentation of our navy does not arise from ships begun in a period of war, but from ships which have been laid upon the stocks for several years antecedent. During the last war, I can state, without the possibility of contradiction, that out of twenty-four ships of the line, prepared and finished for actual service, two alone were supplied from his Majesty's yards. What conclusion then, it may be said, do I intend to draw from these facts? I wish to establish it as a system that should be acted upon, that when the circumstances of the times require extraordinary efforts, you should look to the building of ships by contract; and that you should also look to the augmentation of your navy, not in the precise moment when necessity calls for exertion, but many years antecedent to the pressure of any unforeseen exigency. As to the difference of building between the king's and the merchants' yards, it was evident that no material difference arose in point of expense, since, in the latter, the amount of the expense was regulated by public advertisement, and the work was to be executed in the best manner. Now, Sir, if I am not very much

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mistaken, I am enabled to state, that, since the present lords of the admiralty have come into office, only two ships of the line have been contracted for, to be built in the merchants' yards. I mean to shew that entering on the present war, when our navy could not be in so good a condition as at the beginning of the former war, every possible means should have been taken to augment and strengthen it; that it was a period which required greater exertion, and that only two ships of the line have been contracted for, while, during the last war, out of twenty-nine ships of the line, the king's yards furnished but two. But if the admiralty be liable to censure for these omissions, it will be found still more so from details which I can pledge myself to prove in the most satisfactory way. I have explicitly to state, that there are at this moment docks and slips in the river unoccupied, which are calculated for building fourteen or fifteen ships of the line. When, therefore, all these circumstances are put together, and fairly considered, I hope I shall not be told, that they do not constitute grounds for an address to his Majesty.

The next motion I have to make is, "That there be laid before the house a list of such ships as have been built in the king's yards in 1793 and 1801." But if gentlemen should think any information on this head might be the channel of improper intelligence to the enemy, I shall feel it my duty to abstain from pressing the motion on the house; for I am aware that there will still be grounds sufficiently strong to convince the house, that the construction of vessels in the merchants' yards, is preferable to that which is now adopted in those of his Majesty's. I shall afterwards submit a motion for the production of a list, similar in substance and time, of the vessels built by contract in private yards; and to this, I conceive, no material objection can be made. A noble friend * of mine, on the bench below me, has, on a former night, entered into a comparative view of the state of our naval force in different years; but it was so generally couched, as to be very little suited to the present inquiries which form the objects of my motions. It is material for the

* Lord Castlereagh.

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house to remark, that in the former war we set out with 16,000 men, who were soon after augmented with 2,000 more, and in the course of the year were increased to the number of 75 or 76,000, including marines. In the present war we started with 50,000 men, and it should not pass unnoticed that we also engaged in it when our mercantile marine was increased in a material proportion. Yet, what was done? Why, although we began with 50,000 men, and had all the great advantages arising from an unprecedented prosperity of trade and commerce, our naval force did not exceed, in the number of men, 86,000 at the end of the year. Thus, in the first year of the former war, we had an increase of 60,000 seamen, and on the first year of the present war, an augmentation of 36,000 only.

In the few plain statements I have made, the house will perceive that I have cautiously abstained from all general reasoning, and that I have carefully confined myself to such grounds as I have thought sufficient to justify the motions I have to bring forward. Should the motions be refused, I trust, however, that I shall be indulged by the house in any further reasoning and explanation which I may be called upon to employ; and should they be granted, I shall reserve, for a future day, the remarks and illustrations to which their objects must naturally lead me. The considerations which they involve are of the first importance, and render it, in my mind, the indispensable duty of parliament to agree in an address to his Majesty. I shall therefore conclude with moving, "That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, praying that his Majesty may be graciously pleased to give orders, that an account of the number of ships of the line, of ships of 50 guns, frigates, sloops of war, bombs, hired armed vessels, &c. as have been in commission, with the distribution of their respective services on the 31st of December, 1793, on the 30th of September, 1801, and the 31st of December, 1803, be laid before the house."

After the question had undergone considerable discussion, Mr. PITT rose to reply:

He declared, that he would endeavour to detain the house, at that late hour, as short a time as possible. It must, however, be

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evident that he was bound to answer some of the remarks which had been brought forward. He agreed with a learned gentleman*, that any vote which was given that night for the papers did not absolutely proceed the length of censuring his lordship. They were called upon to grant certain papers, deemed requisite for an inquiry into the conduct of his lordship, and the honourable board of which he was the head. They were called upon to view, with the eye of candour and impartiality, the merits of the case which he had presented for the consideration of the house. To grant the documents for which he moved, would be the best means of establishing the character and conduct of his lordship, by the inquiry which he proposed to institute. To refuse them would create those doubts which must always be injurious to a public character, however pure it might be considered by his friends. To refuse them would also have an evil tendency—it would serve to excite doubts as to the real strength of the nation. And what doubts? Doubts as to our capacity for the resistance of a very powerful enemy, whose visit to this country we are taught to believe will take place in the course of a very few weeks. Before such a terrible emergency arrives, all doubts ought to be removed, by the production of such papers as would demonstrate at once the real strength of the country.

If these papers be deemed necessary to ascertain our capacity for the resistance of the enemy, why deny them? Is parliament, for the sake of protecting the board, to be left doubtful of our strength and power at this great and awful crisis? Is that very parliament, which makes a liberal expenditure for the security of the country, to be left in a state of doubt and dismay, because ministers do not choose to gratify their moderate wishes? The greater the danger, the greater the necessity for knowing the arrangements and strength of the country at the eve of one of the most serious events about to be recorded in our history. Should the papers be refused, which, from the disposition of those connected with administration, appeared likely to be the result of his efforts, our doubts would be increased, not only respecting our

* Mr. Fonblanque.

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capacity to meet the enemy, but our doubts would also be increased respecting the conduct of the nobleman who presided at the admiralty. It was as much as to say, "do not inquire into our conduct, for there are certain facts which cannot bear public investigation." It was as much as to say, "give us unlimited confidence, believe in our professions of vigilance and activity, but do not attempt to institute an enquiry, for we can never consent to such a measure."

What sort of confidence does the board want? That blind and false confidence which exposes the safety of our country! That confidence which sacrifices our public security for the sake of screening from censure a department of government the most important at this particular period to the interests of the country! Is this the kind of security which the honourable baronet* boasts of as operating so powerfully on his mind, as to induce him to retire this evening, and lay down his head on his pillow with confidence? It is a dangerous and alarming confidence—a confidence which benumbs our senses, and lulls us to sleep, while the enemy is at our gates—a confidence which cannot fail to excite the most lively emotions in the minds of men of serious reflection, when contrasting the terrible activity of the enemy with the alarming supineness of our government.

But let it not be said I am trifling with the feelings of the house by these melancholy views. I believe, with a fit application of the resources, the country may not only be rendered secure, but triumphant. My only wish is to remove the evil of deception from before our eyes, to scout that false confidence under which ministers shelter themselves—a confidence which, if passed over in silence, may endanger the very existence of the nation, because it avows and cherishes a trick upon itself. Let the honourable baronet, therefore, retire to his pillow, if he please, and wrap himself up in his charm of naval confidence!

I have been very much astonished at the extraordinary turn this debate has taken. Ministers had previously applied to be informed of the nature of the motions I meant to propose. I in-

* Sir William Curtis.

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formed them; and I certainly understood it was their intention to accede to two of the motions, without any objections being suggested. With this persuasion, as I have lately often intruded very much on the time, and, I fear, the patience of the house, I thought it unnecessary to enlarge on the nature, circumstances, and object of the motion. Consistently with this reflection, I merely stated the leading object, from doing which I had no sooner retired, than the right honourable gentleman* below me rises and asserts, that I have made out no case on which the present application can be founded. I must confess this is not treating me with that candour I had reason to expect. A case opened, and a case proved, are two very different things; but it is not at least a necessary consequence that these two stages in the same cause should not succeed each other. I should be very much surprised if the case, even as it now stands, should by any gentleman, be considered feeble. The first prominent feature of it is, to possess such a naval force, under the present danger of invasion, as would be fully competent to guard these islands. I say the force ought to be greater; that it is less than it ought to be, and than it might be, if the means of the country were put in requisition and activity. Are not these, then, grave and important considerations, and are they not directed to provide against the greatest possible calamity, and for the security, nay, the existence of the country? The next distinguishing feature of the present motion, is to lay a sufficient foundation to keep the navy under such an establishment, that, whatever may be its present condition, a permanent force may be in future supported, adequate to the accumulating perils to which the nation may be exposed. These preparations are the more necessary, because the present war succeeds a recent one of great length, in which the naval force had unavoidably received considerable damage. Can I, consistently with the respect I owe to this house, inquire if these matters, which immediately concern the present safety and future strength of the country, are subjects of importance? or if any materials can be supplied, on which a case may be more firmly supported?

* Mr. Tierney.

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The right honourable gentleman below me, has refused the main object of this motion, and he is to be a powerful supporter of the present measures. Whether his aptitude be great in the support of an administration, as it was in opposition, we have to learn—we have yet to learn what his abilities are as a defender. He has been instructed already in a severe school; but I very much question if he has distinguished himself, or will do so, under the new character he has been induced to assume; and he certainly has enjoyed sufficient opportunity to remove our uncertainty in this particular, of which, however, he has not been disposed to avail himself. I am told by the honourable gentleman, I have been seized with a panic to which the gallant heart of the noble lord could not be liable. Am I to understand that the right honourable gentleman speaks the sentiments of his neighbours on the same bench, when he affects to ridicule this panic as idle and absurd? I know that the noble lord alluded to is above all ignoble fear; but he would be wholly unfit for the station he occupies, if he were not to entertain a rational conviction of danger; if he did not know that difficulties were to be encountered under the mighty system of hostility adopted by France. If ministers have felt none of these apprehensions; if to this alarm or panic they have been wholly superior, how are we to explain their recent conduct? For what purpose have they been engaging the time of parliament with prolix and energetic discussions on the military force necessary to defend the sacred soil of our country from insult and violation? Whence, if this be the case, all this bustle and activity, this voluminous correspondence with the most eminent characters in military life; and whence this variety of measures, which I will not say they have proposed, but to which they have acceded? Is this too all vain delusion; or have they, with me, been degraded by a panic which they assume when military matters are under consideration, and reject with indignation when the naval force is the subject of debate? It has been truly said by my honourable friend*, that the naval defence of the land is our national passion, in which we indulge all the excesses of instinctive pride.

* Mr. Wilberforce.

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With this generous propensity, let us look to the collective strength of the enemy on the opposite coast, which seems to realize the fictions of ancient story. Can it be supposed, with this view before us, we can for a moment forget all the advantages of our insular situation; the glories of our maritime strength; the navy which has extended our commerce, which has established our authority, which has raised us to the rank we enjoy amongst surrounding empires, and which has conduced to our command and aggrandizement in every quarter of the earth? Can we, I say, in the moment of danger, fail to remember this grand source of public security? In such a crisis as this, am I, with all the indifference of a cold comparison, to be referred to the commencement of the former war with France, when she was torn by civil dissensions—when she was encompassed by hostile nations in array against her—when all Europe was leagued for her destruction? Is that period to be assimilated to the present, when we are to meet her single-handed, without the co-operation of one ally; and are we to limit our exertions to what they were at the time when circumstances were thus totally different? Yet it will be recollected, that then the navy of this country, at least, was so far prepared, that scarcely one fleet ventured to forsake the ports of France that did not supply new laurels to the gallant defenders of their country, on the tempestuous element by which we are surrounded. The enemy, who have lost their internal trade, their exterior commerce, their fisheries, the very foundation of their navy, have, in the prosecution of a gigantic enterprise, created an artificial marine of prodigious extent; and are we not to proportion our means to the new circumstances in which we are placed, to the new perils to which we are exposed; and are we to have the ardour of all our generous passions dissipated by the application of this "cold comparison?" I trust, therefore, I shall not be accused of disgraceful fear, of idle panic, if I contend our exertions ought at this moment to exceed all former precedent; because the dangers by which we are encompassed exceed all former peril. Unless I am much mistaken, the kind of minor marine I have recom-

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mended, is a force easily prepared, neither of tedious nor expensive construction.

But, gentlemen have argued as if I wished to lay aside the floating-castles by which this country is protected, and to disband the British navy. I was sorry to hear an honourable admiral* deviate into this gross misapprehension. True it is, I have expressed some confidence in gun-vessels, for a particular purpose; but have I ever been insane enough to express a doubt, that for the blockade of Brest, Toulon, Ferrol, and the various ports occupied by the ships of the enemy, our men of war and our frigates should not be employed? Even should the flotilla of the enemy venture toward our coasts, I have no doubt that a wide destruction and general confusion will be occasioned by the annoyance they will receive from our regular navy: but some will probably escape among the vast multitude; and am I culpable in recommending that this minor navy should be prepared, under such an emergency, to render certain that security which would otherwise be only probable? Our first defence then is by our larger ships; our next in the shallows by our flotilla; the third expedient is, to prevent the landing of the enemy; and the fourth and least convenient is, when they have gained a footing on English ground, to meet them in the field of slaughter. Will gentlemen, who affect to despise these gun-vessels, not admit, that between the ports of Harwich and Portsmouth there are numerous banks and shallows where ships of the line are incapable of approaching the shore? I am not ashamed to say, before professional gentlemen, however eminent, that if we neglect to provide against contingencies, by the kind of force to which I have now adverted, we do not do all in our power to conduce to the national safety.

Terms of derision have been employed to render this species of marine defence contemptible, and it has been called a Mosquito fleet; but when gentlemen are pressed a little more on the subject, then we are told there are 500 or 700 volunteer gun-boats.—These boats, we are to recollect, are not under the in-

* Sir Edward Pellew.

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mediate command of the admiralty, and have actually been forced into its service by the enthusiasm of the people. A great proportion of these are engaged on an extent of coast with which I am particularly acquainted, and I know this force would have been ready much sooner, and would have been in a much better condition, if the admiralty had given them due encouragement. Honourable gentlemen have dilated on the distinction of gun-boats and gun-brigs, and the latter have, it seems, received some commendation from high professional authority. It is to gun-vessels of this last description that I have all along adverted; and twenty of these, which have had the foremost duty under Lord Keith, are those which were fitted out in the time of Lord Spencer: so that the utility of these is acknowledged by Lord St. Vincent; and as a further proof, those that have been lately ordered, under the circumstances stated, are precisely of the same kind, and differ only in the delay, I contend, needless delay, in their construction. I have then the satisfaction to reflect, that my sentiments are sanctioned by the approbation of the admiralty; and all I regret is, the procrastination.

But we are amused with a brilliant flash of eloquence (not lately a source of ordinary entertainment in this house), and we are told by an honourable gentleman*, "all this scheme of gun-vessels is a job." This sentiment, clothed in a wandering meteor, which fixed its ray of indignation upon me, shall not so far dazzle my organs of vision, as to prevent my discovering the way by which I may relieve myself from the terrors of its effulgence. It is not necessary to conclude, because a service has been converted into a job, that it is an useless service. If pernicious food had been given to the honourable gentleman, he would not conceive it to be a reason for abstaining from all nourishment; so in the former case we must learn to distinguish between accident and substance, and, rejecting what is injurious, retain what is valuable. But as ministers have boasted of the comparative force, let us for a moment examine what it is. In 1801, we had 101 sloops, we have now 84; we then had 69 gun-

* Mr. Sheridan.

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vessels, we have now 37; we then had 101 cutters, we have now 52. It is conceived to be a fatal objection to these smaller vessels, that they will engage those men who would be more usefully employed to supply the crews of the regular navy. Does it occur to the house how small a number these vessels require? How many that are free from the impress would gladly engage in a service of this kind? When the enemy approach, it is highly probable we shall have some days notice, for so vast a machine cannot be put in motion without giving us full opportunity of observation. This notice would give us ample means of supplying this flotilla from a thousand sources. If ministers have not a sufficient number of seamen, they might have applied to parliament for more, and no hesitation would have occurred in a compliance with their request.

It is said, much has been argued on this frivolous subject of twenty-three gun-boats, and that it did not deserve notice, much less to have been made a ground for the present application to the house. The smallness of the quantity is the very ground of the objection; in all I have said I must have been wholly misunderstood, if gentlemen are not aware that the objection is stronger in proportion to the insignificance and contemptibility of the affair to which it is directed. All the motive of this discussion on my part, is to shew that the exertions in the naval department are inadequate. Great as may be my respect for Lord St. Vincent, I cannot be guilty of the hypocrisy to say, this department of the service has been wisely conducted. I have a greater stake, even than the reputation of the noble lord: it is no less than the safety and existence of the country, and the fulfilment of my duty at this critical juncture, as a member of the British parliament. What in nature can induce the admiralty, acknowledging as they do the utility of this force, thus to circumscribe it? This conduct seems to be governed by some such motives as influenced the 5th Harry, when he would not have another hero to share in the victory. Are they fearful of adding another gun-brig to partake the glory? The building in merchants' yards, they say, is subject to serious objections. As far as my experience can inform me, none of those

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that have been stated are capable of being supported. Have we not the best mercantile marine in the world, and is not that erected in these yards? The ships of the East-India company, which are as perfect and complete as any applied to the purposes of navigation on any service whatever, are built in these yards. Why then are these extensive depôts of private property and public industry to be so mercilessly decried? The honourable gentleman who was so severe in his censures on the merchants' yards, was not less so in his remarks on the peculation in his Majesty's yards, and these he introduced as a defence of the noble lord: but he was not aware that he by this defeated his own purpose, and tended to shew that the navy could no where be supplied; for both in the private and public institutions for its maintenance, there was such a system of nefarious dealing, as to make them both equally unfit to be employed.

I admire the uncommon valour, I extol the vast renown, the glorious achievements of Lord St. Vincent. To him we are highly indebted for shedding extraordinary lustre on our national glory. I did believe that when his lordship took upon himself the direction of our naval affairs, the public service would derive great benefit from his patriotic exertions and professional skill. I did believe that his name, in whatever naval capacity, was a tower of strength;—but I am apt to think that between his lordship as a commander on the sea, and his lordship as first lord of the admiralty, there is a very wide difference. It cannot, surely, be a subject of surprise, that Lord St. Vincent should be less brilliant, and less able in a civil capacity than in that of a warlike one. And with all my lofty ideas of his character, as a brave and successful naval commander, I shall not shrink from my duty in censuring him when presiding at the board of the admiralty, if he deserve it. I do not deny but that my motion for the production of the papers imply blame on his lordship. I, therefore, candidly avow, that I do not come forward on this occasion from a tender regard to the character or conduct of his lordship, while at the board of admiralty. I claim this right of censure as a member of parliament, if I can make out good grounds for the inquiry;

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but without I am allowed the official documents, I cannot prove the validity of my grounds, I cannot follow up my inquiry. If ministers choose to make this a question of confidence, they cannot, they shall not, induce me to the surrender of the inestimable privileges transmitted to every member of parliament by his predecessors in the house. In bringing forward the subject of this present discussion, I have no other motive than merely to discharge my duty to my country, whose safety, in such a crisis as the present, is the first object of my heart.

The house divided on the question;

Ayes 130
Noes 201

April 23, 1804.

MR. FOX, in pursuance of the notice he had previously given, this day moved, "That it be referred to a Committee of the whole House to revise the several bills for the defence of the country, and to consider of such further measures as may be necessary to make that defence more complete and permanent."

Mr. PITT rose immediately after the Chancellor of the Exchequer:

I cannot agree, Sir, with the right honourable gentleman who has just spoken, in the description of the motion which is now before the house. It is a motion, in my view of it, which is neither calculated to embrace opinions hostile to government nor to any ministers whatever, nor to embrace opinions that may have been entertained on small and minute points, and thereby produce a general concurrence against ministers, to criticise upon their conduct, when such members might have but small and minute differences in their opinions as to the detail of a system to which they generally assent; but it is a motion calculated to embrace all those, who consider that such a measure ought to be adopted and substituted for that which they consider to be inadequate for our defence, and to call the attention of those who are

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disposed to take a grave and radical review of our public affairs; a review of all the resources which government have brought forward; who think that no part of our defence is adequate to what we ought to expect,—all those who are convinced by experience, that, after twelve months have been given to these gentlemen to exhaust all the resources of their minds, and to amend and improve their plans from the suggestions of others, nothing satisfactory has been accomplished,—all those who are convinced upon mature reflection, that from the present ministers, or under them, nothing is likely to originate to give to this country any fair chance of having what is due to its own zeal and its own exertion, at the most important and the most critical period that ever existed in its history: and I confess I am one of those who look at this subject in that point of view, and I am inclined to support this motion on almost all the grounds which the honourable gentleman urged who moved it. I feel it my duty to my sovereign and to my country to do so, not only on all the reasons which that honourable gentleman has urged in support of it, but also for many which he omitted to state, and which I shall slightly touch upon.

But the right honourable gent eman who spoke last, with all his recollection of the records of parliament, and with all the force of his imagination, which he indulged to supply his recollection, has only proved, that he knew of no motion like the present; and also by the same authority, which is himself, that when circumstances are extraordinary, the measures to provide for them are likewise extraordinary; and I think we may add, that whatever extraordinary measures may be adopted, the present crisis which requires them is also extraordinary. And this the right honourable gentleman appears to be surprised at; as if it were extraordinary to propose a committee of this house, to consider of the means for providing for the defence of the country; as if it were extraordinary, that after twelve months of war, preceded by a peace which, by the confession of ministers themselves, was a mere notice of that war, and a war in which they themselves have been exhausted in their skill, (and yet in the course of the

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last twelve months, they have brought forward nothing in which there has not been a variety of contradiction in the plans, repugnancies in the measures, and imbecility in the execution,—nothing in which every step has not been marked by unnecessary delay; and at last the measures adopted amounting almost to a retraction of the principle upon which it was founded;)—I should say it is extraordinary indeed, if, after having such and so many melancholy proofs that ministers themselves, after repeated trials, have proved what is to be expected from them, by what they have produced, this house did not enquire into this important subject, in the hope of being able to devise some better means for the defence of the country than any which they have brought forward for that purpose; a course in which if they are permitted to go on, there can be no hope of safety to this country. Such has been the mode in which they have managed the important charge of defending the country! I feel that I am compelled to make this strong and explicit declaration of my sentiments. I do consider the measure for the increase of the regular army, as a measure for which ministers are unable to provide; for it is only a few nights ago, since we had the confession of ministers themselves, that the necessity was so great for the making of a provision for this purpose, that the measures they themselves had formerly brought forward, they would consent to abandon, if by any other measure the increase of the regular army could be produced.

I do not mean to say any thing of the propriety of the measure proposed upon the subject of an armed peasantry, nor of substituting an armed peasantry, for the volunteers, which the right honourable gentleman who spoke last, at one time was about to state, as being the idea of the honourable gentleman who has brought forward this motion; but he set himself right afterwards, and admitted of a difference, not a very slight one, that of adding an armed peasantry to the volunteers, instead of substituting them for the volunteers. And if there are persons who think, that, in point of substance, the volunteers are more essential for the actual and efficient service of the country

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than the armed peasantry, as certainly there are great numbers that would be for altering the quality of our mode of defence, then they may assent to having the aid of the peasantry, but not in the way in which it was stated by the right honourable gentleman: and as to the volunteers, we have a full right to avail ourselves of the full benefit of that force — a force which has often been, and justly is, a favourite with this house and the public — a force, which, whatever it may have been in its origin, has now the advantage of being formed, and of being in a great state of efficiency as a force, though none of its efficiency has been owing to ministers. Often it has produced among us some difference of opinion, as to the precise extent to which you should carry it, and as to the circumstances under which you should render it most effectual; but it is a force which all of us allowed to be an extremely valuable force. And now that there is hardly any difference between the honourable gentleman who made this motion, and his Majesty's government, on the subject of the armed peasantry, he says it may be a proper thing if ministers and parliament shall think it right. So the right honourable gentleman has gone the length of admitting the measure may be right, if he shall hereafter think so. I say, I think it clearly right that you should institute an inquiry whether it is right or not. Have we not been told by ministers for these six months past, that the invasion might take place, perhaps within 24 hours? Is it a time to procrastinate any wise measures, any efficient plans of defence, at a time when we see that the enemy have surmounted many of those preliminary difficulties which some months ago were deemed invincible? Have not the enemy supplied those means of conveyance which it was at first thought must render all their threats vain and futile? Have they not, in the face of that navy which ministers so confidently boast has been carried to its utmost strength, and has been distributed with the most perfect judgment—have they not, within sight of our shores, and in defiance of our obstruction, assembled in one port between 13 and 1400 vessels, capable of conveying from 50 to 100 and 150 men each? Have

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they not proved that all our reasonings about the impossibility of sailing from one port, the difficulty of a concerted attack, the obstacle of winds and tides, were unfounded, and that the contempt we entertained for their preparations and for their menaces was ill-founded and unwarranted? With such facts before us, ought we to suspend or delay any means that can contribute to our safety? We ought not to treat with contempt, or with a false security pronounce impracticable, the projects of a bold, enterprising, and desperate, though often fortunate enemy, and one, too, that never stood in the way of good fortune by a dread of bad. If then an armed peasantry is calculated to be of any utility in Essex, Kent, or Sussex, in opposing an enemy, and retarding their progress to the metropolis, it is fit that no time should be lost in devising a plan for obtaining this additional aid.

The honourable gentleman next contends, that the motion is unconstitutional; but what is there unconstitutional in referring to the consideration of a committee of the whole house, which I understand to be the object of the motion, [Mr. Fox nodded assent.] certain acts passed by the legislature, so that they may be modified, altered, and improved? Is the honourable gentleman, who so long filled that chair, with so much credit to himself and advantage to the house, so little acquainted with parliamentary usages, as not to know, that in a committee of the whole house alone several proceedings can regularly originate? Matters of religion, grievance, trade, finance, &c. must first be discussed in a committee of the whole house. If, then, questions on those subjects must originate in a committee, can there be any scruple to refer to a similar committee measures, the object of which is to defend every thing that is dear and valuable to a state, the religion which exalts, the commerce which enriches, the laws which regulate and protect? Is there any thing extraordinary, any thing dangerous, then, in the present motion? Will it be said that the system of defence is so good that there is nothing to be added to it? Is the experience of it in its fruits and effects such as to encourage us to rely with

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implicit confidence in the energy and resources of ministers? What measures have they ever adopted that have not been thwarted by some other of their measures? What efficient plan has been proposed for the recruiting of the regular army? Can we indulge the vain and chimerical hope, that without any new regulations as to the period of service, such as those proposed by the right honourable gentleman, recruits will be obtained for eight guineas, when they can hardly be procured for forty and fifty pounds? Is it upon the wisdom, the vigilance, and the energy of these ministers that we can rely, when we have seen that no one measure for the public defence can they be truly said to have originated, when several they have retarded or enfeebled? I am satisfied that some plan for the permanent recruiting of the army ought to be settled, and that we ought with all dispatch to proceed to that important subject.

But neglecting the regular army, have ministers improved and perfected that system of the volunteers in which they have spent so much time? I venture to affirm, that the volunteer system is still far from that state of perfection to which it might be carried. The army of reserve, instead of being suspended, should be modified. In regard to fortifications, too, in which, hitherto, so little has been done, I will venture to state, that due precautions in that department have been much neglected, and that many things have been omitted to be done, which, in case of invasion, would tend both to save the lives of men, and to check the progress of an invader. From all that I have heard, too, on the subject of the navy, and in spite of that magnificent catalogue of ships which ministers have produced, and which I shall not at present dissect, I must repeat, that the conduct of that branch of our defence has not been such as the public had a right to expect; and upon this subject I may take an opportunity to state circumstances that will astonish the house and the country. These, and many other considerations, form the most conclusive argument in favour of the motion; and though the right honourable gentleman who made it, did not dilate on these topics, he naturally expected,

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and stated his expectation, that they would be taken up by other speakers in the course of the debate. It is true that ministers on this, as on former occasions, have given us a pompous enumeration of the force of the country. I have heard that statement with pride. It affords the most consolatory evidence of what the country is capable of doing. But I and other members of this house have at least as good a right to exult in that survey of our strength, as ministers. We have not been wanting in our exertions to contribute to call forth the spirit of the country, and to organize its strength. That spirit and exertion, however, belong to the country, and are not to be ascribed to the direction or the energy of the government. Indeed, if there be any who ought peculiarly to separate that pride from any feeling of personal merit, it is the present ministers, who have had so little share in the national energy. No one measure can they claim as their own; no one measure have they improved and perfected; very many they have weakened by their delays, and destroyed by their incongruities. Whatever then the spirit and zeal of a free and brave people may have been, under the sense of danger, ought fairly to be separated from the tardiness, languor, and imbecility of ministers in every thing of which they have assumed the direction.

Ministers boast of what others have suggested, or voluntary public zeal has effected, as if what was done was perfectly adequate to our security. But is it enough to have provided against the danger of a final conquest? Enough has not been done unless we have adopted every practicable and rational means of checking the enemy, should they invade our shores, with the least sacrifice of life, with the least waste of the public resources, with a rapidity that will disappoint the enemy's projects of devastation. Enough has not been done, unless every thing has been provided, by which, in the shortest space, we may be enabled to defeat the enemy with such signal overthrow and destruction, as will for ever deter them from a repetition of the attack, and for ever relieve the country from the alarm and anxiety of invasion. I do not mean to say that the enemy would, according to all

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human calculation, succeed in their designs, even had we no other means of defence but those which now exist; but have we reason to believe that our strength is yet arrayed in the best manner, that our forces are distributed at the proper points, so as to act with the most decisive effect? Unless this be done (as I fear it is not), it is not enough to say that we have 184,000 regulars and militia, and 400,000 volunteers; and, indeed, when it is proved by their own statements, that the resources of the country are so great, it forms an additional ground of censure against ministers, if our system of defence be not adequate to every demand.

As to the observations which have been made upon the amount of force which should have been kept up during the peace, and the proportion which existed at the renewal of the war, whatever I may think with respect to the opinion held by the honourable gentleman who opened the debate upon a former occasion, I cannot, without surprise, hear from the right honourable gentleman who has just sat down, that he conceived the force which was maintained during the peace as amply sufficient to meet any probable emergency; for that right honourable gentleman was in possession of much knowledge of the disposition of the enemy, which must have satisfied his mind of the propriety of making more extensive preparations for a state of hostility. That knowledge the right honourable gentleman to be sure studiously concealed from parliament, and therefore the honourable gentleman upon the opposite bench was, with many others, incompetent to form any opinion of the impending danger; but not so his Majesty's ministers, who had yet neglected to provide against it. They who, by a manifesto, since published to the world, explained that there were grounds, almost from immediately after the conclusion of the peace, to complain of the conduct and to suspect the intentions of Buonaparte, had yet omitted to devise measures to counteract his designs, and to put the country in a state fitted for the description of hostility to be apprehended. In this state the country is not, in point of fact, even now placed; and this forms one of my reasons for concurring in the motion

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before the house, because, as they who thought the peace not likely to continue, did not prepare for war, and who, since the war has commenced, have not preserved that course of vigorous exertion which the situation of the empire called for, they are not those in whom I would confide for the establishment of our security. Ministers foresaw the war, and yet they did not attempt to ballot for the militia, as they should have done during the peace. They should have availed themselves of that period, when they must, according to their own confessions, since so repeatedly made, have contemplated war as something more than probable, and set every means in motion of defending the country against invasion.

The observations they were enabled to make, at the close of the last war, of the plans and purpose of Buonaparte, were sufficient to assure them that his first notion was an invasion of this country, which the short period that elapsed between the establishment of peace upon the continent, and the conclusion of the treaty of Amiens, did not qualify him to attempt; but the progress of his then preparation served to shew that his resolution was not to make desultory attacks upon us, but to do that which he has since accomplished, viz. to collect a large force upon some part of the coast most convenient for the purpose of making a descent upon this country. What then are we to think of those ministers who, with such an opportunity of observation, overlooked renewing the ballot for that important part of our force, the militia, during peace? And how did they act towards the volunteers, on whose gallantry they now profess so much to rely? The house must have in recollection the letters which ministers addressed to that body of men during the peace, which letters were so much calculated rather to damp than to animate and encourage the zeal of those corps. But this was not all; for, under circumstances peculiarly auspicious for the purpose, and with the prospects before them I have already mentioned, they refused to attend to a plan suggested to them for providing a certain resource for the recruiting and supply of our regular army. This plan was founded upon the same principle as that of the

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army of reserve, with the addition of that which I took occasion lately to lay before the house, and which, if adopted when my opinion was first urged to ministers, would have furnished the means of adding to our army, with all possible expedition, not less than 40 or 50,000 men. This plan has, I admit, been since adopted in part, and I shall certainly feel it my duty to urge the adoption of the whole of it again and again. The committee proposed by the motion, I conceive to be the most convenient place for entering into the detail of this, and other measures for the public defence, to no branch of which, I perceive with regret, have ministers attended in due time, and to the execution of none of which do they appear to be adequate. Passing by all the omissions I complain of during the period of peace; drawing a veil over their conduct on that occasion altogether; and supposing the war recommenced as much to the surprise of ministers, as to that of many persons in this house and the country; supposing that they were not at all prepared to expect it, let us only look at their proceedings since that event, and let us examine how far their measures have been so contrived or executed as to justify a hope, much less an opinion, of safety to be derived from their exertion.

The first part of their plan of defence, and that to which they seemed principally to look, related to volunteers. This topic has, I am aware, been already very fully discussed, and on that account overlooked by the honourable mover of the proposition before the house; but upon this point I would wish to ask of ministers, whether they foresaw, or had even a remote idea, at the commencement of hostilities, that this description of our force would have extended so far? whether they contemplated that it ever should be so numerous? It was known by those who had any knowledge of their sentiments, who had any conversation with ministers, that they had no such intentions, and that, on the contrary, they expressed their disapprobation of the policy of their predecessors, in allowing the volunteer system to enlarge so much. This fact I allude to merely to shew that they are entitled to no praise for the multiplication of the volunteers; and to state that

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the spirit which produced the increase of that body, arose out of the discussions of this house—a spirit which, as ministers themselves admitted, far outvies their calculation or hopes, and also, as it seemed, exceeded their power of direction, for they afterwards thought proper to check and restrain it.—So much as to the origin of the volunteer system. But how did ministers proceed to carry that system into execution? Why, without going much at length into this part of the subject, which I do not mean at present, I will merely remark on the case of exemptions, which have been much and very justly objected to. The propriety of granting these exemptions I never could see: certain it is, that they were never necessary; for the volunteers, for the most part, required no such thing in the shape of encouragement to offer their services, and many of them were not at all aware, when they did engage, that any exemptions were to be granted; on the contrary, it is notorious that they were in several districts actually subscribing a certain sum each to purchase substitutes for any of their body which might be balloted for the militia.

Such was the state of the volunteers when the act of parliament was passed, with the strong recommendation of ministers, for allowing exemptions, clogged, however, with such conditions, that the measure was not to be well understood. In another part of this act of ministers, there was something still less intelligible with respect to a volunteer's right of resignation, upon which ministers had evinced the most complete want of penetration and foresight. Had they judged wisely, they never would have attempted to dispute this right, for, paradoxical as it may seem, nothing tends more to preserve discipline among those corps, than the undisputed exercise of this right; and the reason is this, that while a volunteer has the right of leaving a corps, he cannot object to any regulation that may be deemed necessary by a commanding officer for the promotion of order and discipline in such corps, the private having his choice to submit or resign, But as to the act of ministers, the attorney-general, for whose judgment and learning I entertain the most unfeigned respect,

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interpreted the law upon resignations in one way, and the court of king's bench in another. Ministers, in this contradiction, thought proper to circulate the opinion of the former as that to be acted upon by the volunteers, although they have since avowed that they did not agree with that opinion, and that they intended to introduce a declaratory law upon the subject. This I must class among the most unaccountable proceedings of ministers.

As to the volunteer system generally, according to its present constitution, it appears to me to have several radical errors, and principally as to the mode in which the volunteers are distributed over the face of the country. When they were forming, and particularly when it was determined to limit their numbers, regard should have been had to the proportion proper to be assigned to each district. With that view it would have been right to consider the difference between the inland and maritime counties, which were the more probable points of attack, and which it was the most important to preserve. Our great naval arsenals, and those places which are most contiguous to our principal manufactories, ought of course to be the first objects of government in settling the relative proportion of volunteers which the several districts should be allowed to furnish—allowed, I call it, for it was at the discretion of government to accept the services of many corps which they rejected, and generally without any reference to the consideration of local defence which I have mentioned. When they thought proper to limit the volunteers to six times the number of the militia, and for what reason I cannot divine, they put Staffordshire and Derbyshire quite on a par with the maritime counties. No distinction was made in favour of those districts which lie most convenient to the enemy's coast, and which are most likely to be the first points of attack. Can any man say that there was any thing like policy in such an arrangement, or that indeed there is to be found in any part of the structure or execution of the volunteer system, so far as ministers are concerned, that which can deserve the character of discretion, or the approval of a statesman? There was, in fact, no part of

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the conduct pursued by government towards the volunteers, which did not form some ground for complaint, which did not offer some evidence of wavering and inconsistency.

The house has witnessed the part they took at the close of the last session, when an honourable gentleman* on the other side undertook to panegyrise the zeal and gallantry of the volunteers. When that honourable gentleman, two days before the session closed, thought proper, and, in the opinion of many intelligent respectable members, very prematurely, to move a vote of thanks to the volunteers, he stated that such vote was not only a just acknowledgment for the patriotism, which they who were then embodied had manifested, but that it would operate to encourage further voluntary offers of service. Ministers applauded warmly the motion of the honourable gentleman; but how did they afterwards act? The honourable gentleman moved at the same time, that there should be laid before the house, at its meeting after the recess, a list of such new corps as should volunteer; but there was another list which the honourable gentleman neglected to move for, namely, of all the corps which should be reduced or rejected in the same interval. Had the honourable gentleman done so, he would have seen what use had been made of his motion; for the first step taken by ministers almost immediately after its adoption was, to suspend the progress of that voluntary zeal which the honourable gentleman, in common with every man who valued the character and safety of the country, so much admired. Ministers determined at once that the volunteers should not be increased any farther, but that, on the contrary, their numbers should be diminished. The notice of this determination was speedily circulated among the volunteers, accompanied by the honourable gentleman's vote of thanks. Thus the volunteers were complimented for that, which government at the same time told them they did not wish for, they would not accept. There is a word in French, *remercier*, which literally implies returning thanks for proffered services, which it is not intended to accept; and this word has

* Mr. Sheridan.

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close analogy to the conduct of ministers in the communication of the motion of thanks, which they agreed in, in company with the strange resolution which I have already mentioned.

In regard to the enrolment of volunteer corps, as far as such enrolment is connected with the provisions of the defence act, I must again repeat the complaint I have often made, of the total omission of government, to execute the powers vested in it by that act; and any difficulties that have arisen in the progress of the ballot, I do conceive to be attributable to the non-exertise of the power I have referred to. As to the refusal of adequate pecuniary and military aid to the volunteers, I must observe, that it is amongst the most culpable and inconsistent part of the conduct of ministers. Without going minutely into the consequences of such conduct, which it would be more convenient to detail in the proposed committee, I have only at present to remark, that whatever difference of opinion may exist between my honourable friend* on the lower bench and me, with respect to the volunteers, and the practicability of rendering them perfect in military discipline, there can be no difference between us as to this point, that they ought to be furnished with the best instruction that is attainable, and both he and I have a right to complain of ministers in not following up their own principle, by giving the necessary aid to promote the improvement of the volunteers. My honourable friend has always maintained, that the volunteers cannot be rendered equal to, or fit to act with regular troops; but ministers have uniformly resisted this opinion. Why then have they not provided adequately for the execution of their own ideas? No; they have only allowed pay for twenty days in a year, although, in the opinion of all military men, no new-raised regiment of the regular army, with all the advantages of subordination, martial law, &c. could be disciplined fit for service in less than six weeks or two months. Will any man say, that so short a period should be deemed sufficient for the discipline of the volunteers? But I shall be told, probably, that it was expected the volunteers would, independently of the twenty days, attend

* Mr. Windham.

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to drill on every Sunday. If they were, still should I maintain that, Sundays included, the time was not sufficient to instruct them, and should not be relied on in the existing circumstances of the country, when we are daily menaced with invasion—that invasion which ministers have been perpetually telling us was daily to be expected since the middle of last summer. Notwithstanding this apprehension, such has been the behaviour of ministers, that I much fear, if the enemy should not attack us until even the middle of next summer, he would find the volunteers very imperfectly disciplined.

I cannot help expressing my surprise that ministers could have ever seriously calculated upon the probability that the labouring classes, of whom so many of the volunteers consist, would be so prompt to devote the only day they have for recreation and repose to the study of military discipline. It certainly did not betray any policy or consideration so to calculate; but even supposing they were so to assemble, and also to attend the twenty days, how were they to attain the instruction desired from the present mode, and from that which has prevailed uniformly? I suggested to ministers a plan of instruction, which I was told should be considered; but as they have never yet acted upon it, nor appear at all to consider it, their promise of consideration upon this, as well as upon other points, reminds me of a practice in the legislative assembly of a neighbouring nation (the United States of Holland), in which, when it was determined to get rid of a question, the resolution was *ad referendum*, which meant to take no more notice of it. The nature of the project I thought it my duty to recommend to ministers, related particularly to that which I have often mentioned in this house. For the advancement of the discipline of the volunteers, I urged the necessity of appointing adjutants to a certain number of men. This has been in part acceded to, but in what manner? An adjutant is appointed to such corps only as amount to 400 men, and to them only in case they exercise eighty days in the year, although the men are allowed pay but for twenty days. Where, I would put it to the common sense of any man, can be found a stronger in-

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stance of weakness and inconsistency, than this order furnishes? No provision is made for the pay of the adjutant, unless the corps exercise eighty days, for one-fourth of which only the men are made any allowance. Is not this alone enough to expose the mind of ministers—to shew their disacquaintance with the means of executing their own purposes? Indeed, I am perfectly convinced of their want of vigour; every circumstance serves to shew it; and I have therefore the strongest conviction upon my mind, that they are incapable of acting upon any thing like system, of adopting or executing any well digested or energetic plan for the defence of the country. I do not of course place any hope on their exertions, and therefore concur in the propriety of the proposed committee, where every question connected with our security may be fully investigated.

One reason, I recollect, for so tardily adopting the plan for the appointment of adjutants, was the difficulty of procuring officers from the line to fill those stations. I recommended that serjeant-majors should be chosen; but to this I was told, that serjeant-majors could not be persuaded to give up their situations for such adjutancies, unless they were allowed half-pay. I saw no good reason for declining to make this allowance, and I therefore advised it in December last. I was promised that the subject would be taken into consideration. I afterwards applied, in March, to know the result of the consideration, but I was told that no decision was made; and I understand it is undecided still, while the discipline of the volunteers does and has for months back so imperatively called for an immediate decision respecting it, although this was one of the defects in the volunteer system, which government promised to cure.

When, before last Christmas, an application was made to ministers with regard to the confusion which prevailed among the volunteers, the gentlemen who applied were desired to wait until after the Christmas recess, when a digested plan would be brought forward by ministers, which should remove and prevent the recurrence of the evils complained of, and communicate to the volunteer system all the perfection of which it was sus-

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ceptible. This digested plan has been laid before the house, and at length made its way, after various alterations, through it. Those alterations were added in the house of lords; and now that it is returned to us, there is scarcely one feature remaining of the original measure, of the well-digested plan of ministers. The suggestions made to them by others they reluctantly adopted, and the object of those suggestions they in some instances have almost defeated, as in the case of inviting the volunteers to permanent duty, and applying the guinea proposed to be given them as bounty, which is to be distributed in such a way as to hold out no inducement to the men, or benefit to their families.

Ministers have been equally injudicious in every other project of defence, from the army of reserve, to the enrolment of classes under the general defence act;—an act which I had the honour of a large share in suggesting, and I lament much that ministers did not adopt it at a more early period; but the fact is, that so far from ministers having spontaneously taken any vigorous proceeding for the defence of the country since the commencement of the war, I state broadly, that no part of the measures for the increase of our military establishment has originated with them. If the right honourable gentleman means to deny my assertion, I shall appeal to the recollection of the house, whether in June last, when the army estimates were under discussion, I did not ask the right honourable secretary at war *, after he had finished his statement—I did not ask if what he had mentioned comprehended all the provision that ministers meant to make for the defence of the country? To this I was answered in the affirmative, and I accordingly gave notice of my intention to submit a measure founded on the same principle with that of the army of reserve. Any benefit that may have resulted from that measure is not, I assert, attributable to ministers, who were quite at a loss what course to take—who knew not, in fact, what measures were applicable to the dangers of the country.

* Mr. Bragge.

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I will not dwell on the execution of the army of reserve act, as I shall go into that subject very fully on Wednesday next, and if I should not then have the good fortune of persuading the house to accede to the proposition which I would wish to have ingrafted on the army of reserve bill, in order to provide a constant and regular supply of recruits for our regular army, I shall feel an advantage in the existence of such a committee as the motion before the house proposes to establish, as I may thus have an opportunity of again pressing the project upon the consideration of the house;—a project which, if I am able to demonstrate its practicability for great objects in view, I am sure that every man will feel to be desirable, and all will be ready to give it their concurrence. If I can shew that even a small increase can be derived from this project to our regluar army, it is impossible to doubt that any member will refuse it his support. The mode proposed by ministers to raise any addition to the regular army, to supply the suspension of the army of reserve, I confess I cannot understand. They have not stated any inducement to men to enlist beyond eight guineas bounty, and how they can procure them for such a sum, while thirty guineas and more are given for militia substitutes, it is difficult to imagine, unless the intention be that which no one has yet avowed, because all have been unanimous in condemning the practice, viz. that of raising men for rank.

It may be said that this practice has prevailed when I was in power: but then the experience of that practice afforded a complete warning against it. I am quite ready to declare, that I am sorry for the share I had in that measure, and experience convinces me, that it ought never again to be resorted to. Other gentlemen have appeared, and professed to be equally adverse to that measure, and their minds must be of a strange character if what they have observed is not sufficient to dissuade them from it. Nothing can be more absurd than to suppose, that if they persist in the old and scandalous practice of crimping, all its attendant frauds and impositions will not return; and it is equally absurd to fancy that only eight guineas bounty will be

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given. Why not let the army of reserve go on along with this new plan, whatever it may be? If officers are to run a race together for rank, as I understand they are, (for although the intention is not avowed in this house by ministers, applications are known to be made to and by several officers,) why take away the competition of the army of reserve? I cannot conceive any thing more irrational. When a new mode of raising recruits for the regular army is proposed, it naturally brings to my mind an opinion which is much disputed, and upon which, because it is so disputed by some great military authorities, I cannot presume to pronounce a decided sentiment, I mean the propriety of raising men for limited service; although I certainly should think it the more eligible policy, and best calculated to render the army respectable and efficient. However, military objections as to the difficulty, if such a system existed, of supplying our foreign stations, must be overcome before the system be attempted.

As to the plan for bringing the Irish militia over here, I do not approve of it under existing circumstances. No argument can be drawn in favour of such a plan at present, from a precedent which occurred in quite a different situation of things. With respect to the interchange of the militias of the two countries, there are many physical objections to it that would render it a measure very disagreeable to the officers connected with both militias; and here I must notice a rumour which has gone abroad, that applications have been lately made to the privates of the West Kent militia without the knowledge of their officers, to volunteer their services for Ireland: this practice deserves to be strongly reprobated. What, to try to prevail on men to quit their own coast, within half a day's sail of the enemy, to proceed to the distance of Ireland!

The honourable mover of the proposition under debate has alluded, in the course of his speech, to the power which, in my opinion, belongs to the crown, to call out the population of the country in the event of an invasion as expressed in the preamble to the general defence act. I perceive, that the honourable gen-

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tleman's sentiment differs from mine. I do not mean to discuss this subject at present; but I must observe, that nothing appears clearer to me than this proposition,—that the state has a right to call on the people to defend it, and that in the crown, being the depositary of the power of the state, is vested the right of so calling out the people upon a great emergency. This right I think I could shew, from a series of precedents, to be recognized by the constitution and custom of this country; that it is a right inherent in the crown to exercise this power, according to the necessity of such case as may arise, and to be limited by that necessity. The crown, it must be admitted, possesses the power of putting any district of the kingdom under martial law, in case of invasion; subject, however, to that responsibility to which ministers would be liable for the abuse of any such power.

Upon the respective interchange of the services of the two militias of England and Ireland, I think, considering the peculiar principles on which they are officered, it would put the landed gentlemen of both countries to great and unexpected inconvenience; and therefore would operate injuriously on that constitutional establishment. If, however, this interchange of service is right at all, it must be on general principles, or on account of particular and pressing urgency, that supersedes all regular establishment, such as arose from the situation of Ireland, when, during the former administration, the English militia volunteered their services to that country. If the present ministers do not advance any general principle to justify the measure, (and certainly no idea of urgency presents itself on either side of the water; that there is no necessity, is obvious, from the very arguments of ministers, for they say, "do not be afraid to vote with us on this subject, as it is not our intention to carry it into execution by a partial and discretionary measure,") it must of course be unjustifiable and wrong. On general principles they have not attempted to defend it. This last measure of his Majesty's ministers shews clearly that the regular army is not yet adequate to the necessity of the state, and implies that means should be taken to increase it. The method of so doing may be subject to some variety of

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opinion; perhaps I may not see it exactly in the same light as the honourable gentleman *, yet I do not perceive any material practical difference between us. The general principle and outline of our national defence appears to me good, regarding as it does the regulars, army of reserve, militia, and volunteers. Were they less defensible in principle than they are, I should consider them as existing establishments, in the present moment, more agreeable to confirm and improve, than abolish and substitute by new.

Thus I declare my opinion on this subject, without at this time entering into a more particular defence of it. With respect to the power of the crown to call on every subject under its dominion, in case of absolute need, this, I take, under some form or other, to be incident to the very establishment of civil society, and, in fact, whenever occasion required, has been exercised. The principle is, however, limited by its necessity, which scarcely can arise but when the state of things would authorise the crown of itself to proclaim martial law; and if the constitution should survive that urgent state of things, the counsellors of his Majesty would, doubtless, be as amenable to constitutional responsibility for that, as any other act of their administration. As such is the undoubted right and prerogative of the crown, I should think, with a view to possible emergencies, that legislative provision should, in the present juncture, a little anticipate the justifiable necessity to which I have referred, at least so far as to put every man in the maritime counties, likely to be the seat of the enemy's attempt, under the immediate power of the crown, in case of actual or imminent danger of invasion. In those counties most likely to be the seat of war, such as Kent, Essex, Sussex, Suffolk, Devonshire, Cornwall, and the vicinity of Newcastle, I also think a greater proportion of volunteers should be allowed than in others, at least so far as the convenience and voluntary offers of individuals will allow. But I shall not stop here. I must say, that our naval means are insufficient for our defence; and that there is a great deficiency of the means for keeping up

* Mr. Fox.

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our navy. Into these points I shall enter minutely, upon some future occasion. At present I shall only say, in vindication of myself from all the obloquy thrown upon me by officers, brought from distant stations to support the present system, that, as to the specific force which I recommended, I did not recommend barges, and lighters, and such sort of trash as they reproached me with advising. I recommended good stout gun-brigs, and I have had the pleasure of seeing great activity of late to increase that very species of force.

Another objection has been made to my system. I recommended fortifications, and I have on this account been reproached with an attempt to lessen the spirit of the country, and to involve a great and unnecessary expense. What I recommended was, not a general system of fortification, but that, where there were great districts possessing great local bulwarks, there a judicious mixture of art and nature, which, at a small expense in money, might spare many thousands of men, would be the best and wisest policy. I know many places in which a few thousand pounds expended, would give more security than as many thousand men could afford. This is obvious to all military men, and the system is beginning to be acted upon; but at the same time it must be admitted, that it was as obvious last summer as it is now. I do not wish, by these observations, to interfere with the department to which this system may seem to belong. I believe, however, that it does not rest with the department of the commander-in-chief, or any other, but with the cabinet. I have discharged my duty by delivering this my sincere and undisguised opinion. I hope it is not hastily or inconsiderately entertained; but sure I am that I should consider it treason to the best interests of my country, if, such as it is, I did not openly declare it.

The motion was negatived;

Ayes	204
Noes	256

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April 25, 1804.

Mr. Secretary Yorke having moved the order of the day for the House to go into a Committee on the bill for the Suspension of the Army of Reserve act,

Mr. PITT rose, and addressed the House as follows:

In rising, Sir, to oppose the motion for your leaving the chair, it is not my wish to occupy the attention of the house longer than appears to me absolutely necessary; and therefore I have no desire to enlarge on topics connected with the general subject, which have, in the course of late debates, undergone the most ample discussion. Before I proceed to the description of the plan of which I have given notice to the house on a former day, it is my wish to say a few words on the nature and complexion of the bill which it is the object of the right honourable gentleman's motion to bring under our consideration in a committee. As far as I am able to understand it, the only effect of its adoption would be to relinquish all chance of the benefit of that augmentation of our disposable force, which, in the unanimous opinion of all persons in this house, ought to be the principal object of attention with his Majesty's government. It would be to relinquish all chance of the continuance of future benefit, arising from a measure which, though in many points of view impeded and retarded, has had the effect of procuring, within the space of twelve months, a more considerable augmentation of our regular force, than could perhaps have been obtained in any other way, at the time and under the circumstances in which the measure was carried into activity. It appears to me that all these chances of benefit are given up, without substituting in their room any system by which the great object of the augmentation of the regular army is to be obtained.

If I understood the statement of the right honourable secretary of state below me, there were three measures, by the adoption of which his Majesty's ministers flattered themselves that they would

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be able to augment the regular disposable force of the country. The first of these measures was, the acceptance of the voluntary offers of a certain proportion of the Irish militia to extend their services to this country. The second measure had in view the augmentation of the militia of Ireland. The last of the measures, directed to the great object in view, was the formation of a number of new regiments, to be raised independent of that competition which is at this moment admitted to be most fatal to the speedy recruiting of the regular army. On these different measures proposed for the augmentation of our disposable force, it is not now my intention to enlarge; but I must be permitted to observe, that in none of them does there seem to be any thing which is at all calculated to be effectual in producing the completion of this object which, without exception, is admitted to be of the last consequence in the present circumstances of the empire. It is true that a certain proportion of the Irish militia have volunteered their services to this country. In this offer it is doubtful whether there is less of policy than of national advantage. Before the house can admit the policy of receiving such offers, it becomes necessary to look a little to the degree in which the interchange of the services of the militia of both countries is to be conducted, and I may add, whether, in extraordinary circumstances, this interchange ought to be encouraged. It cannot, in reason, be denied, that such an interchange must depend on circumstances of special emergency; and what I maintain is, that the acceptance of the voluntary offers of the militia of Ireland, at this time, is not only productive of all the evils arising from an undefined interchange of services, but can be attended with none of the advantages arising from such a measure, originating from well-considered views of national interest. On the subject of the augmentation of the militia of Ireland, my opinions are not by any means different. It will not be disputed by his Majesty's ministers, that the offers of extended services by a certain proportion of the militia of Ireland, depends for acceptance, in a great measure, on this subsequent measure. It is allowed on all hands, that Ireland cannot lose such a proportion

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of the means of its defence, without receiving something like an adequate return. We must understand, that the augmentation proposed is meant to form the return to which I have referred. But will any gentleman in this house for a moment affirm, that a mere resolution for the augmentation of the Irish militia, will at all compensate for the loss of a considerable proportion of troops, allowed on all hands to be adequate to the defence of Ireland, combined with the regular military force? In fact, Sir, if ministers act consistently, the offers of the Irish militia cannot be accepted, unless some return be made to Ireland. By the system of augmenting the militia, this return cannot be expected for a considerable period, and therefore the one measure is not only inconsistent with the other, but utterly inefficient for any object of obtaining a greater disposable force.

No man will go beyond me in maintaining that the militia are a constitutional, a respectable, and a most useful force, when kept within proper limits, and applied to the specific object of their formation. It must, however, be with every man a question of peculiar jealousy, to find the militia come in competition with the regular army under any circumstances, but more peculiarly under the circumstances in which the proposed measures of ministers necessarily placed that competition. They admit that there is a necessity for the augmentation of the disposable force of the country. They fix on Ireland as that part of the empire where that disposable force is to be more readily procured; and at the time they are holding this language, they are determined that the militia of Ireland shall be, to a considerable degree, increased. It must, Sir, appear singular, that when the deficiency of the quota of the army of reserve to be furnished by Ireland is materially deficient, it should be proposed to augment the militia;—a species of force confessedly limited to services less applicable to our present circumstances. If new levies are to be made, why are these deficiencies in the army of reserve, or why are not the new levies to have the precedency? The mischief of competition is allowed. The professed object of ministers is to have a disposable force; yet, with these admissions, the militia

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of Ireland, allowed on all hands to be limited in their terms of service, are to counteract the new regular levies, for which, on a former occasion, so much merit was claimed. It is admitted that, by the measure of the army of reserve, we have obtained a very considerable augmentation of our disposable force. In Ireland it is proposed that the militia shall be augmented. On what principle, then, is it that the operation of the reserve bill is not suspended in that country? [Here Mr. Yorke signified that a bill was brought in for suspending the act in Ireland.]—If the law is to be preserved in force, on what principle is it, that though there are now deficiencies in the army of reserve for Ireland, to the amount of 6 or 7000 men, the augmentation of the militia is to be preferred to this force? Will it be pretended that the augmentation of the militia will so materially contribute to the object in view, as the augmentation of the army of reserve, from which constant supplies for the regular disposable force of the country may be fairly and reasonably expected? It is really not easy to ascertain on what ground a force, though not generally disposable in the first instance, yet not indisposed to general service, should be lost sight of, while a species of force which, by their constitution, is confined to limited service, should be preferred. Must the system which ministers have so much favoured, as calculated to add to the disposable force of the country, be altogether abandoned, because it may not have accomplished all that was expected from it in their sanguine expectations? I really cannot consider it in any other view than as a measure inimical to that which ministers hold out to our observation. On the one hand, if the militia of Ireland is augmented, the levies for the regular army must, in a great measure, be suspended. On the other hand, if the levies for the regular force are to be carried forward, the proposition for augmenting the Irish militia is altogether preposterous. The language of ministers is, that they want to have men at a reduced bounty. But how is it that they carry their object into practice? They do not pretend to deny, that their first object is to have men for disposable purposes; and this they hold forth as the object which ought to have the precedence

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of every other consideration. It is rather curious, however, to look at the mode in which they reduce the plan to practice. They wish recruits for the regulars in Ireland, and they are desirous of having an augmentation of the militia in the same country. It is in vain, Sir, to deny, that the competition in these cases is altogether unequal, and that, where it is proposed to raise 10,000 additional militia in Ireland, the plan of raising a number of new regiments is quite impracticable and impolitic.

On every general principle, then, I do most heartily contend, that the suspension of the army of reserve act is not at all called for on principles of necessity, of policy, or of utility. In stating this, I wish it to be fairly understood, that my opinion is founded on general principles. A great deal of argument will not be necessary to shew that those who most zealously objected to the army of reserve, ought not to agree to the motion now before the house. If they objected to the act, in consequence of the high bounties which it encouraged; if they think that the principle of the ballot, which it promoted, did not proceed on constitutional principles; if they are convinced that it did not proceed on constitutional principles, then, Sir, they surely cannot give their assent to the motion now submitted to our consideration. If the bill is so much liable to censure; if it is so little in consonance with the opinions of these gentlemen, they cannot surely be satisfied with the suspension of such a measure, which, according to their own principles, ought to be totally repealed. This is a proposition which cannot be fairly denied, and therefore it is the less necessary to enlarge on it. But, Sir, if the system of the army of reserve, as now existing, can be modified; if a description of persons not all likely to enter into the regular army, can be brought into limited service; if this temporary plan of recruiting can be managed, so as to promote the great end in view, without increasing either national inconvenience or private misery, there will not, I am sure, exist a doubt that such a system ought to meet with every degree of support and encouragement. If such a system can be brought forward, it must at least, Sir, be one to which the house could not, consistently with their duty, refuse

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their most serious consideration. Though, on the present occasion, my object in rising was to explain the outlines of such a plan, I do not so much flatter myself as to suppose that it will be perfect; but it is not too much presumption to imagine that it is a plan not altogether unworthy of the consideration of parliament.

Before I go on very shortly to state to the house the nature of the plan, it may not be improper merely to advert to the grounds on which the suspension of the army of reserve act ought to be considered. The first question that presents itself is, whether the reserve act ought to be suspended, or whether it might not be modified in such a manner as to render its application more advantageous? The second question is, whether, if the idea of suspending the act is entertained, this is not too little; and whether, if the idea of suspension is at all entertained, the act ought not to be totally abolished? Conceiving these to be the two great preliminary views of the subject, I hope I shall meet with the indulgence of the house, while I state the outlines of a plan, the result of long and careful examination, the effect of digested and careful comparison of the wants and circumstances of the country. Without going into any details on the subject, which I shall have ample means of doing hereafter, it will be sufficient for me at present to give an outline of the plan I propose. Allow me then, Sir, to introduce the subject generally, by observing that, under the present circumstances of society, under the present extension of commerce, under all the new openings offered to labour in all its branches, it is not going too far to say that the encouragements to enter on a military life must be very materially diminished. Looking, then, to the difficulties attendant on the recruiting of the army; looking to the difficulties of obtaining men for unlimited service, compared with service for a short period, and on their native soil, I must be allowed to assume it as a fair supposition, that a number of men would be induced to accept of offers of limited service, who would not listen to any idea of military service for life. With this view, then, it will not be denied, Sir, that the services of those who are far from willing to enter into

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the regular army, should be encouraged for that limited species of service to which they are by no means disinclined. The house will not suppose that I am going too far when I affirm, that such a mode of recruiting for the regular army in a commercial country, is that most fully justified by the whole history of human affairs. Every man knows that limited service must, in the first instance, be preferred to service knowing no limitation of place or time. But while this is allowed, it is not less clear, that if men have once entered into the army for a limited period, military habits are soon contracted, and those, who, in the first instance, would never have thought of indefinite military service, enter into this enlarged engagement with the greatest possible alacrity. The transition from limited to permanent military service is, therefore, what every man, in the least acquainted in military affairs, can anticipate without the smallest difficulty.

But, Sir, I would not even put the question on this ground. Even independent of any legislative interference, independent of the acceptance of any offers of those, who, originally engaging for limited service, might afterwards enter into the regular army, the house, I am sure, will agree with me in thinking, that there may occur periods of patriotic ardour, when all idea of limited service will be lost sight of; that the native courage and heroism of the English character will display itself; that Englishmen will look not only alone to the safety, but to the honour, to the dignity, and to the glory of their country. Under such circumstances as these, it is not presuming too far to suppose, that voluntary offers of extension of service will be numerous. If, Sir, we can suppose that the national spirit of the people, even unassisted, will produce these effects, how much more may its influence be expected to be, when it is supported, directed, and encouraged by judicious regulations? On these principles, then, I object to the acceptance of the offers of the Irish militia to extend their service to this country, because the same object may be obtained without any violation of constitutional principles. That the extension of the services of the militia of both countries may be desirable under an emergency of peculiar danger, no man can reasonably deny.

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But, however the zeal and the alacrity of those making the offer may be commended, the policy of accepting must still be a ground of grave deliberation with those who pretend to guide their public conduct by any principle of wisdom or of policy. Before the services of the militia of Ireland can with propriety be accepted, we have to ascertain whether, by this measure, the general security of the whole empire is consulted. But, reverting particularly to the augmentation of the Irish militia, as an addition to the military force of the empire, I must be permitted to make a few observations. The idea of disparaging the services or importance of the militia establishment, is certainly the farthest from my contemplation. At the same time, Sir, it has been allowed by its most zealous friends, that, in many instances, it has been carried to an extent inconsistent with the general circumstances of the country. With this idea I do most cordially agree, and beg leave, at the same time, to add, that in my judgment the militia of England ought not to exceed 48,000. If the number is carried beyond that, then there is a danger that the number of officers fit to discipline the different corps will not be sufficient for that purpose. The importance of regular respectable officers no man will deny; and if the augmentation goes beyond the proportion of officers which can be afforded them, unquestionably that augmentation is impolitic. My first view, then, Sir, is, that the militia of England should, as soon as possible, be reduced to 48,000. If we are to keep up a considerable limited force, all the descriptions, of which it is composed, ought to bear some proportion. The militia establishment of the country now amounts to about 72,000, and we ought to have had 40,000 of the army of reserve in Great Britain. What I would, in the first instance, propose, would be, that the militia should not exceed 48,000, and that from 40,000 the army of reserve should be extended to 64,000 men. In this arrangement, I should propose that there should be an augmentation to the army of reserve in England of 24,000, and that 4,000 should be the augmentation for Scotland. In submitting this arrangement, the house will understand, that I do not at all allude to any sudden

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and abrupt dismantling of the militia. It is equally far from my wish to interfere with their progress in discipline. All that I propose is, that the vacancies in the militia, as they successively occur, shall not be filled up for that species of the public force; and one important advantage of this arrangement would be, that competition to a material degree would be destroyed. By this arrangement, the number of persons liable to the army of reserve would be enlarged; and it would not require much labour to shew that, by this enlargement, a very material advantage would be gained. I may merely call the attention of the house to the experience of last year. If, out of 37,000 raised by the army of reserve act, upwards of 9000, according to the returns on the table, have, within considerably less than twelve months, volunteered into the regular army, I am surely not presuming too much in supposing, that a similar cause would be accompanied with a similar result.

In proposing to the house the permanent establishment of the army of reserve, though certainly on a very modified system, I am sensible that objections may be readily started against the proposition. But, Sir, let it be remembered, thatthe times in which we live are not ordinary times. When we are called to encounter extraordinary and unprecedented dangers, we must lay our account to submitting to extraordinary and unprecedented difficulties. If we are called on to undergo great sacrifices, we must bear in mind the interesting objects which these sacrifices may enable us to defend and to secure. I need not remind the house that we are come to a new æra in the history of nations; that we are called to struggle for the destiny, not of this country alone, but of the civilized world. We must remember that it is not for ourselves alone that we submit to unexampled privations. We have for ourselves the great duty of self-preservation to perform; but the duty of the people of England now is of a nobler and higher order. We are in the first place to provide for our security against an enemy whose malignity to this country knows no bounds: but this is not to close the views or the efforts of our exertion in so sacred a cause. Amid the wreck and the misery

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of nations, it is our just exultation, that we have continued superior to all that ambition or that despotism could effect, and our still higher exultation ought to be, that we provide not only for our own safety, but hold out a prospect to nations now bending under the iron yoke of tyranny, what the exertions of a free people can effect; and that at least in this corner of the world, the name of liberty is still revered, cherished, and sanctified. Viewing thus the pressure to which the measure I propose may give rise, I contend these are fair considerations. The object of attention then will be, that what is unnecessary shall be removed, that what is oppressive shall be mitigated. On these principles my whole plan proceeds. Mitigated, however, as it may be, still the pressure must be severe. But let it be remembered, that the object is not only to repel from our shores a danger that threatens our existence as an independent nation, but to restore to Europe the chance of regaining all that is most dignified in the condition and in the relations of civilized nations. To any question of pressure, I conceive that is a most satisfactory answer with every reflecting mind.

But having said so much on the subject of the pressure attendant on the plan I mean to propose, I shall now mention generally the number which appears to me to be necessary to complete the establishment, as the foundation of a regular, permanent, military establishment. I shall go on the supposition that 60 or 70,000 men should be kept up every year, according to the proportion of the different counties, regulated on the principles of the ballot for the militia establishment. In the detail of the system there must of course be a great deal of modification; but I would beg leave to state generally, that, in my opinion, the regular army would receive an addition of 14 or 15,000 men annually, by voluntary offers. In the first instance, you would be sure to procure a large number of men who could not be otherwise obtained, and the same men would be induced to enter the army on the general principles of human nature, founded on habit and experience. The ordinary recruiting of the army would not be impeded or interrupted. All the means of a defensive and an offen-

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sive system would be united. By following the system, we should not only be secure at home, but be provided with the means of holding out hopes for the restoration of states now sinking under the most odious tyranny. It has often occurred to me, Sir, that the indiscriminate manner in which volunteering from the army of reserve has hitherto been allowed, is highly ruinous to the best interests of the army. By the plan which I wish to propose, a certain degree of shape and consistency would be given even to the volunteering from the army of reserve into the regular army. What I would in the first instance suggest would be, that the quota furnished by each parish and county should be attached to the corresponding regiment in Great Britain or Ireland. If this plan were once reduced to practice, and judiciously acted on, I have no doubt that one of the greatest obstacles to the recruiting would be removed. It is obvious, that by such a plan, all the influence of domestic feeling and local connexion would be obtained, if those entering into the army of reserve were connected with the particular regiment for which they must feel a peculiar predilection. But this would not happen alone in the case of recruits attached to old battalions. If supplementary battalions were formed, the same effects would result from the same considerations. Similar feelings betwixt both battalions would be encouraged, and similar ardour would be created. But, Sir, the good effects of such an arrangement would not be so limited. It will not be denied that the present system of indiscriminate volunteering from the army of reserve is extremely discouraging to the officers employed in drilling the raw recruits. After he has wasted all his labour in bringing the men to some kind of perfection, I put it to the candour and the good sense of the house, whether it must not be painful to the feelings of any man to think that all his labour is to pass without reward, that those whom he has prepared to advance into the field, are to follow the banners of some other leader. It is not, however, Sir, as a painful consideration that this indiscriminate system of volunteering is to be reprobated. It is evidently calculated to undermine all discipline as well as attachment to officers. If soldiers are attached to officers, this

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feeling cannot be of long duration, because the connexion is hardly formed before it is dissolved. If, on the other hand, soldiers are dissatisfied with their commanders, they know that while indiscriminate volunteering is allowed, they have the speedy prospect of retiring from the control of men whom they may choose to detest and to calumniate. But, Sir, if the system I recommend were followed, all these evils would be done away. Knowing that their connexion with their officers was of a permanent nature, the men would learn both awe and regard; and the officers, firmly attached to their recruits, would spare no time to render them perfect in all the duties of a military life. The consequences that would result from this system are obvious. We should have the men in an intermediate state more efficient for the purposes of defence, and we should have them more disposed to enter into the regular disposable force of the country. If a thousand regular troops were wanted, we should have a thousand troops of the reserve perfectly qualified to supply their place for every purpose of internal defence. We might have men for limited service, but then they would be under officers of no limited views; men who had seen service in every part of the globe, and who knew most perfectly to qualify men to advance into the field of battle, with that confidence which is the best pledge of success. Indeed, in a short time the whole of your defensive force would thus become as good and efficient as your regular force; by that means the men will, as it were, become worth double their number, with a view to the defence of the country; they will be changed in a short time to ready-made soldiers, while, at the same time, the plan of regular recruiting may be enlarged and made more effectual. It thus unites several advantages in every point of view, unless in so far as the mode in which it is to be raised may increase a competition. Considering, however, the numerous benefits to be derived by the adoption of such a plan, perhaps gentlemen may consent to admit of a certain degree of competition, seeing that it will be materially narrowed. It appears clearly to my mind, that by the plan I have suggested, the disadvantageous competition in the recruiting of the regular army

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will be avoided. As the ballot is now regulated, if it falls upon a person, whose engagements in life, or other circumstances, render it unfit that he should serve, he must find a substitute, and no limit is assigned to the sum he must give to procure one; he is to sacrifice, perhaps, 40*l.* or 50*l.* and expose himself and his family to numerous privations, not for the benefit of the state, but from the impolitic plan adopted to supply its exigencies. The effect is obvious: it has occasioned a species of subscription club, which converts the matter into a sort of parochial rate, by which the important military duty of recruiting is committed to parish officers, instead of being intrusted to officers who are competent to discharge it; and being in such hands, they bid against each other without limit or discretion, to the utter ruin of the service. What I have proposed requires, that if the person on whom the ballot falls will not serve, he shall pay a certain moderate fixed sum; but if he serves, then he shall receive the same amount he would otherwise pay. Another precaution in the scheme is, that the substitute should be found by the parish, and not by the individual; and further, the person so provided is to be taken from the hundred and not from the great market towns, unless under the predicament I shall presently explain. The bounty given will also, according to these arrangements, be examined by the magistrates of the respective counties, who will prevent any deviation from the limits prescribed by law. It will immediately occur on the review of this plan, that there will be no possibility of surpassing the bounty, and from the local limitation, that there will be no danger of interfering, in places of extensive population, with the recruiting of the regular army.

The next consideration to which I request the attention of the house is, the supply of the vacancy, or to provide for those cases where the hundred can procure no substitute; which inability may accrue from a great variety of causes. In such circumstances, the bounty is to be made over to the colonel, who is to pay the limited sum he so receives for the more limited service he requires; that is, that the recruiting parties he employs are to procure men for this particular service; and regulating the quantum

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of bounty to the nature of the duty, no pernicious competition will arise, as the larger bounty will always be given for enlisting into the regular army. There must, in a country like this, where the sources of comfort and enjoyment in life are so well understood, be a great variety of persons who will enlist for a much smaller bounty into a temporary service, but who would not, for any emolument whatever, engage for life in a military occupation. Thus, I conceive, I leave undisturbed the mode of recruiting now employed, and I add a new mode which I will presume to be capable of doubling the supply from the ordinary sources.

Such, Sir, is the nature of the plan; the tendency, I flatter myself, is to improve and enlarge the regular army, by presenting novel expedients for the purpose, and then to conduce essentially to the means of internal defence, and external warfare. It has been justly complained, that the measures for this purpose lately resorted to, so materially interfere with each other, that they successively obstruct whatever is adopted: it has been my endeavour to avoid this error, and to combine the several parts of this extensive system in such a way, that a mutual co-operation may be produced, and that what is good and eligible in itself may be rendered better and more desirable by this connexion. Objections have been stated to the introduction, at this time, of any great scheme of improvement in the service: it is, however, true that the moment of public difficulty is often the crisis of public improvement; the sense of danger inspires men with a portion of zeal and enthusiasm which enables them to surmount the obstructions by which they are surrounded, and they are capable of performing what, under other circumstances, they could scarcely contemplate. What is now recommended seems to me beneficial, whether the country be exposed to the horrors of war, or is in the enjoyment of the blessings of peace. In the present circumstances of Europe, should hostilities terminate, the permanence of such a situation would depend upon the respectable state of your peace establishment, more than on any other circumstance: this I felt, and I recommended on a recent occasion,

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the necessity of preserving a competent force. By the present proposal, this advantage would be secured; a body of men, with liberty to recruit into the regular army would be provided; and, without any ballot, 10 or 15,000 recruits would be ready to supply the ranks in the troops of the line, and able to act with them on the most difficult service, without disgracing their companions in the field of danger. If all or any of these benefits be unavoidably connected with the measure, the house, I am sure, will be disposed to give it an attentive consideration; but I am far from having exhausted all its merits. By the plan it appears, that the officers attached to those provisional troops would be those who are most capable of bringing their discipline to perfection, and in consequence they will be much more ready to act with the troops of the line, than the supplies from the militia, or from the army of reserve. It will not be necessary to abandon the sound maxims of state policy, by which the militias of Great Britain and Ireland are confined to their native territory, and the disposable force of the country may be dismissed to those situations where its gallantry and conduct will redound most to the advantage and glory of the country. I have, Sir, on all these grounds thought it right to resist your leaving the chair, to convert this house into a committee for the consideration of the propriety of suspending the bill of the army of reserve; and I hope it will not be thought that, on a question of this magnitude, I have intruded too much on your indulgence.

Mr. Pitt's motion was rejected;

Ayes	203
Noes	240*

* This small majority in favour of the minister, was succeeded by an immediate change in his Majesty's government. The new administration was composed as follows:

Cabinet Ministers.

Right Hon. William Pitt - - - -	First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer.
Duke of Portland - - - - - - -	President of the Council.

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June 18, 1804.

MR. PITT having moved the order of the day for the second reading of the amendments made in the additional force bill, and the amendments being brought up, read, and inserted in the bill, he then moved, "that the bill with its amendments be engrossed;"—Upon which a debate ensued.

As soon as Mr. Sheridan had sat down, Mr. PITT rose:

Sir—In the observations which I mean to offer to the house, I shall confine myself to the latter part of the speech of the

Lord Eldon	Lord Chancellor.
Earl of Westmoreland	Lord Privy Seal.
Lord Viscount Melville	First Lord of the Admiralty.
Earl of Chatham	Master-General of the Ordnance.
Lord Hawkesbury	Secretary of State for the Home Department.
Lord Harrowby	Do. for Foreign Affairs.
Earl Camden	Do. for the Department of War and the Colonies.
Lord Castlereagh	President of the Board of Controul for the Affairs of India.
Lord Mulgrave	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Not of the Cabinet.

Right Hon. William Dundas	Secretary at War.
Right Hon. George Canning	Treasurer of the Navy.
Right Hon. George Rose, Right Hon. Lord Charles Somerset	Joint Paymasters of his Majesty's Forces.
Duke of Montrose, Lord Charles Spencer	Joint Postmasters-General.
William Huskisson, Esq., William Sturges Bourne, Esq.	Secretaries of the Treasury.
Sir William Grant	Master of the Rolls.
Hon. Spencer Perceval	Attorney-General.
Sir Thomas Manners Sutton	Solicitor-General.
Earl of Hardwicke	Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.
Lord Redesdale	Lord Chancellor of Ireland.
Sir Evan Nepean	Chief Secretary of Ireland.
Right Hon. Isaac Corry	Chancellor of the Exchequer of Ireland.

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honourable gentleman *; because, extricated from the variety of desultory remarks and extraneous matter which he has produced, it is the only part that comes at all near to the real question. I mean the view of the question, as it affects the constitution, the character, and genius of the country. Upon this subject, a great many doctrines have been broached, and many theories have been brought forward to dazzle the imagination. The honourable gentleman who spoke last, has, in the most beautiful language, and that captivating style of eloquence peculiar to himself, laid it down as the privilege and prerogative of our happy constitution, and the characteristic quality of the genius and spirit of the nation, that the people can be blended and consolidated into a military mass, more fit for its protection than a regular standing army. Now this is the very principle for which every one of us has contended, the very system which we all wish to establish. We always admitted the zeal of the country, and applauded its noble and patriotic devotion. In these feelings we perfectly agree with the honourable gentleman: but, much as we admire that military spirit and enthusiasm, few, I believe, would be inclined to push it to the extent which the honourable gentleman wishes; for his argument, in its full latitude, is neither more nor less than this, that, in the present state of Europe, we are not to look up to a standing army. Now, Sir, without examining that position too minutely, I say, whatever may be the sufficiency of the spirit and courage of the mass of the people for their own protection, it is our duty, in justice to our country, to protect the spirit, to spare the courage, and, by the formation of a regular force, to save, as much as possible, the blood of those brave volunteers who have come forward with so much alacrity, and shewn themselves so ready to risk their lives in our defence. Now, in order to attain this end, I do not believe it will be supposed that we are to exclude a regular force from among the necessary means. If not, then the question is only to what degree a regular force is to be maintained; and from hence two other questions necessarily arise: first, whe-

* Mr. Sheridan.

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ther we have at present a standing army of sufficient strength, under all the circumstances in which we are placed? and, secondly, if we have not, whether the present measure is not the best mode that can be devised to supply the deficiency?

As to the first question, it would be idle to argue it. Every gentleman who has spoken this night, as well the honourable gentleman* opposite, as the right honourable gentleman† on the floor, admits the necessity of further exertions, not merely for the purpose of a general defence, nor the extension of our military system, in all possible ways which ingenuity might devise and contrive; but in the very line and course now recommended, and for the very specific and identical purpose of a regular army. If then the necessity of an increased regular force be admitted, I wish to know how the objection upon the ground of the constitution applies? A great part of the argument in favour of an armed mass was, that it added to the variety of our force; but this is in the very spirit of my plan, as it proposes to place all the leading and principal members of that force upon their proper and respective foundations. Now, if we are to look to the keeping up of these different species of force, we must also look to what are to be their proper proportions. Some say the militia ought to be raised to exactly that extent which should make it a balance to the regular army. I disapprove of this view of the subject: the balance and the warfare to which I look, and by which I estimate, are, as it relates to the enemy, as it is more or less competent to resist the foe, and defend the country from attack, and not in relation to any equipoise between the regular and irregular force, or the policy of dividing and subdividing them with a view to produce an equality. Of the militia I will say, that its officers have conducted themselves in a manner as constitutional towards the country as its men have proved themselves vigorous and brave against the enemy; but if it be not a force as available as the regular army, what are you to do? Why, you are desired to carry it higher than its constitutional limits would admit:

* Mr. Sheridan. † Mr. Addington.

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Some insinuate that I mean to reduce the militia below its constitutional principle; but the fact is, that though I wish to reduce it, yet still I mean to leave it higher than even those who complain of the reduction think, according to their own arguments, upon constitutional principles, it ought to stand. I only mean, that the excess shall be taken off, and applied to a more available force.

We are next told, that there is something in this measure that violates the bill of rights, so far as the same respects a standing army. According to the bill of rights, I have always understood that to keep up a standing army in time of peace, without the consent of parliament, is contrary to law. This I conceive to be the principle of that bill. But how do I violate it by proposing to maintain a standing army in time of war, with the consent of parliament;—an army too, amenable to the mutiny-bill, and unobjectionable, I think, in many other respects, particularly after the clause which I moved this day, that it was not to remain embodied longer than six months after the signing of a definitive treaty of peace, and to be subject, while so embodied, to martial law? Such being the case, I give gentlemen all the benefit of the arguments derived from the bill of rights and the spirit and practice of our ancestors.

Now, Sir, in reference to the state of Europe, let us see how this measure operates upon our future safety. Unless we can be perfectly sure, and indeed I know not any degree of foresight and sagacity that should tempt us to suppose that it would not be folly and presumption to be sure — unless, I say, we can be perfectly sure that at the end of the present war, and when that period shall arrive we have no means to calculate or ascertain, we shall see Europe and France reduced to such a state, that we may return to our own system; unless we shut our eyes and are wilfully blind to our destruction, we may find ourselves obliged for years, to make the country a more military nation than it has ever been before thought necessary. Now, if this be the case, there are only two ways by which it can be effected; either by laying the foundation of a large sup-

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ply in peace, that may be brought forward in a prepared state upon a sudden emergency, or by creating a large force, which, though disembodied when its services are not necessary, may be reproduced as occasion shall require. Those who look back to the public feeling at the commencement of the present war, cannot surely forget how desirable it would have been, had we attained that state at which we have only now arrived, after several months of anxiety and protracted danger. With this experience will you then have a regular force which is only efficient while embodied, or a force which may be produced for the necessary occasion without the constitutional objection to a large regular army? Even the very persons who are jealous of a standing army in peace, recommend it in war; and the present measure is such as may be easily efficient when necessary, and facilitates the filling up of the regular force. Upon every ground of public safety and economy, it is particularly recommended to those who would have a large force in war, and a small one in peace. It is the means of a provisional force, which is attended with no expense in peace, and may in time of war be rapidly brought forward for the emergency.

A right honourable gentleman* says, it is not wise to change the character, manners, and habits of the people. The general principle is right; but if it be necessary to have a large force, I ask, what is so little likely to interfere with the habits and manners of the people as the present measure, which establishes no permanent force, and only requires a month's exercise in the year? To hear him, one would suppose it would operate so great a change, that the plough was to stop, and the country was to be converted into a nation of Spartan soldiers; and yet the measure is neither more nor less than to raise by a milder mode that very number of men which the parliament thinks necessary, I mean 16,000 in England, and 3,000 in Ireland, being the amount of the present deficiency; and when that is completed, to raise annually a force of 12,000. Now, whether this is likely to produce a change in the genius and habits of the nation, I leave to the under-

* Mr. Addington.

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standing of the house. As to the difficulty stated, of procuring a sufficient number of commissioned and non-commissioned officers for the number of men proposed to be raised, this certainly applied with equal force to the former plan, and, indeed, is essential to any mode of recruiting, to any considerable extent, the regular army: and, therefore, it amounts to nothing as a particular objection to this bill. If, as it is generally admitted, it is necessary to enlarge the army, it is surely right, in the present circumstances of the country, to begin that increase as soon as possible. Every experience under the army of reserve act shews, that the present bill is likely to be successful, and attract men to enter, when they would have objections to do so for general service. Being once entered, they will gradually become acquainted with the military life, and will, by a natural operation of causes, without any kind of deception, be the more readily induced to enter into the regular service. Without, however, attending in the first instance to its effect in recruiting the regular army, it will immediately have one beneficial consequence, namely, that of setting free a portion of the regulars, nearly corresponding to the numbers raised, which are now locked up in defensive service. The next consequence will be, that, by a slight and natural transition, great numbers will enter into the regular army, and constantly supply its wasting numbers. That it will be successful to its objects, the example of the army of reserve system holds out the best-grounded hope. The plan promises to raise men more expeditiously than any other mode we are acquainted with; at the same time it is free from the evil consequence of high bounty incident to the army of reserve system, which induced many to desert from the regulars to enlist in the army of reserve, and then to desert again for the repetition of the bounty. This great and increasing evil, it is manifest, will be totally corrected by means of the regulations of the present plan, which diminishes, and renders fixed the bounty both for limited and unlimited service. From the first effect of a reduction of bounty, it is natural to expect some check in the numbers recruited, but this circumstance will soon correct itself; and when the recollection of high bounties is worn away, the service will

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thrive as much, with a diminished and fixed bounty, as it does at present with a higher and uncertain one. Be this, however, as it may, the house having already come to a resolution against high bounties, the experiment must be made. It is obvious they have no other choice, having once made up their minds that high and fluctuating bounties are to be diminished and rendered stationary.

Against this diminution of bounty it is to be seen under this plan, what may be the inducement of limited service and local influence, the benefit of which, I doubt not, will fully counteract the evil otherwise to be apprehended from a decrease of bounty. This measure being already determined on by the house, I must take it for granted that there will be no objection to this plan on that account, but rather, on the contrary, that it will therefore meet with general approbation. It has, however, been said, that by striking out the ballot, I had destroyed the only effectual part of my own plan. I must, however, ask gentlemen gravely to consider the subject a little farther before they urge objections of that nature: whatever the plan was originally in my mind, the house has decidedly expressed its dissent, both to high bounties and ballot; so that however desirable either might be on general principles, yet, with respect to this measure, they are equally inadmissible; and therefore, though efficiency is desirable, it is only to be expected in proportion to the opportunity left us to make use of.

With respect to recruiting the army, let it be recollected, there were only four possible modes: 1st, the usual mode of recruiting for bounty by the officers of the regular service; 2d, recruiting by limited bounty, and local influence, as pointed out by this plan; 3d, recruiting by ballot and compulsion, now generally exploded as an oppressive system; and 4th, recruiting by personal ballot, without the possibility of substitution, a mode yet more objectionable. In times of great emergency, this latter mode may doubtless be resorted to, but, in general, it has a rigour not suited to the habits and feelings of the country. Supposing, as is the case, that the first of these modes is not sufficiently productive,

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and a greater force is wanted, we must of necessity have recourse to the second, the third and fourth being, as has been shewn, of a nature not, at least in the first instance, to be resorted to. In adopting the second mode it is also evident, that the first, that of mere simple recruiting, remains wholly unmolested, and has a concurrent operation. Under the present plan we have all the benefit of what may be called regular recruiting, and add to that, whatever may be ob ained by the secondary mode. If any other plan equally productive, and as little objectionable, can be suggested, I can have no possible wish but to adopt it; none such, however, has been suggested, and, perhaps, it is not presuming too far to conclude, that none such can be found. According to the regulations as laid down in the provisions of this bill, the newly adopted system with respect to the army of reserve bill, will in no degree interfere with the higher bounties left to the regular service.

Before I sit down, I shall say a few words with respect to the expectations which I have held out to the country. Gentlemen have said, that they have expected something from me very far beyond the present bill. I am not conscious that I ever encouraged the idea, that I had discovered some miraculous mode of providing for the defence of the country. I say this is the very measure of which I gave notice, except so far as it is improved by the omission of the ballot entirely, and the imposing of the payment of the bounty upon the parish instead of the individual. Whether the measure be worthy of my situation I do not say, but that it is the identical measure which I held out, and taught the public to expect from me, I must contend. That there were other points within my contemplation I also admit, I mean in the naval department, with regard to the proper craft to be used in the narrow seas, and the means necessary to ensure a succession of ships to a proper extent. These subjects, however, as I said before, cannot be comprehended in the present bill; but it does not thence follow that they are neglected by his Majesty's ministers. There were other points, I also admit, which were the subject of my observations before I came into office. If gentlemen will look

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back, they will see that I did propose a measure for our future defence, but that as to immediate defence, I considered that all that could be done was, to improve the discipline of the force then subsisting. But has nothing been done since? I recommended originally, that the volunteers should be called out upon permanent duty. That system has been adopted; and not less than from 150,000 to 160,000 volunteers have been placed in that state for improving their discipline. Now I would appeal to every officer of experience, whether the result of this proceeding, by the improvement of their discipline, has not increased their strength more than if their number had been increased one half? I will not, therefore, have it said, that administration have been wholly idle, and that nothing has been done for the defence of the country. That being the case, I know nothing on my part inconsistent with any rational expectation that the house, or any man who has attended to the notices I gave, could have formed. I am ready to have my measure decided by experience, and I am confident that every discussion will be beneficial to it, as it will place it more and more in its true light. Of the mode of opposition which it has experienced, I have a right to complain. There has been a disposition to draw into argument foreign topics, which divert the attention from the real subject, and in such hands as those of the honourable gentleman who spoke last, may be productive of entertainment, and relieve the tediousness of debate by the brilliant display of wit which we have just witnessed.

As to the argument that the administration is not worthy of confidence, I am at a loss to conjecture upon what ground it rests. This, its first measure, surely cannot be the cause, for it looks to an object upon which all persons of all parties and all descriptions are agreed. There must then be something awkward or unfortunate in the manner of bringing it forward, if it be the cause of this loss of confidence. I confess this is a very delicate subject, and I know not well how to deliver myself upon it. But whatever opinions some people may entertain of the advantages of an administration formed on a broad basis, I

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am satisfied that the principle, that it is the prerogative of his Majesty to choose his ministers, will not be denied. I am the more convinced of this, when I remember that some weeks ago, the honourable gentleman* opposite stated in this house, when it was thrown out as a matter of speculation, who were to be the new ministers, if the late ministry were obliged to retire, that it was not within the province of the house to take any notice of such a circumstance; and if it would have been unconstitutional to agitate such a topic before the removal of that ministry, it is equally unconstitutional to deny the King's prerogative as to selection in every instance: and is it reconcileable with any ideas of constitutional principle and of public duty, that, when a ministry has been changed, their successors should be obstructed in their very first operations, by any combination founded upon any circumstances connected with the recent exercise of his Majesty's prerogative?

An honourable gentleman† has said, I have received a *broad hint* to retire after this recent experiment. I beg leave to say, broad as the hint may be, it is not broad enough for me to take it. I am yet sanguine enough to believe the bill will pass; if it should not, all I have to lament is, that the country will be deprived of the increased means of security which I flattered myself I had provided for it. Should I be disappointed in this respect, let not gentlemen suppose I shall consider it as a defeat. I shall merely treat it as the decision of this house on the dry merits of the bill. If this scheme be rejected, another project, which I trust will be less objectionable, shall be submitted, and the *hint* shall not be taken, until I find my attempts to promote the public security utterly nugatory and ineffectual;—then I shall retire, not with mortification but with triumph, confident of having exerted my best endeavours to serve my country. I will not discuss how far a wider basis for the formation of his Majesty's government would have evinced the wisdom of the sovereign; but I should not think the prerogative entire, if we were permitted here to deliberate on its exercise, so far as to examine the propriety or im-

* Mr. Fox. † Mr. Sheridan.

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policy of inviting a principal person on the opposite bench to participate in the public councils of the state. Thus to interfere would be to alter the constitution of the land, which, although free, is yet monarchical, and for the preservation of its liberties and immunities all its parts should be protected from violation.

From different parts of the house, I have listened to observations, not only applied personally to myself, but to those with whom I have been so recently connected. As to my sufficiency, or to the sufficiency of those in office with me, it is not necessary to say a great deal upon that subject; but I am surprised at the language that has fallen from a noble lord *. I think it a little singular that my acting in concert with a part of the late administration should be made a bar to the confidence of him and his friends. Does my noble relative think, that, on this account, I have justly forfeited the confidence of him and of his friends? I do remember the time when, in the moment of his bitterest opposition to the honourable gentleman†, the noble lord and his friends were so partial to me, that they declared that my admission to a share of the executive power would, in a considerable degree, remove their apprehensions of the public danger. I hope that since that time I have not, by concurring very frequently and acting very cordially with my noble relative and his friends, forfeited the good opinion they were then so partial as to express of me. I confess my surprise too, that, after such public declarations concerning me, they so soon find themselves compelled to withhold their services from the public, on account of the exclusion of an honourable gentleman† with whom they have been so little accustomed to think or to act in unison.

Much has been said of the inefficiency of the members of the present cabinet. But is it to be asserted that the present ministers are unequal to the duties of the station they fill? With respect to the members of the present ministry, and who were members of the last, being liable to the charge of inconsistency, I cannot see the least foundation for it. The present bill is better than that which it supersedes, and aiming at the same end

* Lord Temple. † Mr. Fox.

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by juster means, is fairly entitled to the support of those who supported the former bill. It is said, however, though not quite correctly, that the members of the last administration are a majority of the present. But what, if it were so, would be the inference? There is no reason why those who sat in a former cabinet should not sit in this. I hope the present cabinet is not one in which there will always be a necessity of counting noses, and of coming to a vote upon every measure. When differences of opinion exist, there is room for mutual concession and accommodation where men agree in a general object. If this were not the case, how could any administration go on? far more an administration formed on the broad basis which some gentlemen consider so desirable? Were I to take the *broad hint* which has been given me, and had that sort of administration been formed, the failure of which is represented as having struck such despair throughout the country, how could any measure have been carried in the cabinet among men, who have had long and important differences, unless mutual accommodation and concession had taken place? It is said, however, that there has not been a sufficient change in the ministry. But, surely, the right honourable gentleman * below me at least must be satisfied that the change is sufficient, and that the present *is really* a new administration.—And, notwithstanding all that has been said of it, I hold it be substantial enough to answer the purposes for which it was formed.

Many objections have been urged against it by the honourable gentleman who spoke last, who has indulged himself in that vein of pleasantry and humour, for which he has most deservedly acquired so much celebrity, in comparing some of the members of the present administration with those whom they have succeeded in office, and has indulged himself particularly in contrasting Lord Melville with the Earl of St. Vincent. I should unquestionably think myself extremely wrong, were I to say that Lord Melville was as good a sailor, or understood how to work or fight a ship of war as well as Earl St. Vincent; but yet I can have no hesitation

* Mr. Addington.

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to say, that, in my opinion, there is every reason to suppose that Lord Melville will make a better first lord of the admiralty; for experience has often forcibly shewn us, that it is by no means necessary that a first lord of the admiralty should be a naval character. And, though it may not be fit to speak of myself, it surely will not be considered that it is no change, that the office of first lord of the treasury, reckoned that which has a leading influence in the executive government, is now held by me. Few will doubt that a very real change has taken place. With respect to any differences of opinion which I may have had with the late administration, it will not be pretended that they were of such a nature as to prevent us from acting in the most cordial and satisfactory manner upon general affairs. For those, my right honourable and noble friends, I have uniformly entertained the utmost private friendship and esteem. With them I have thought and acted almost without interruption on every public question since our acquaintance commenced. Neither is there the slightest ground to imagine that another noble friend of mine *, whom I have always esteemed and loved, is degraded by taking the home instead of the foreign department; though I confess there were some parts of the foreign system which I did not approve, and of which it is not now necessary to say more. Those who know the fact, know how far that change was from any motive that could infer degradation. Indeed, Sir, I cannot see with what view such a thing could be mentioned, unless it were for the purpose of sowing jealousies and dissensions among his Majesty's present ministers, and, as such, it deserves my severest animadversion.

If the present bill should be lost, I shall be sorry for it, because the house and the country will thereby lose a good measure; but the honourable gentlemen opposite will be much mistaken if they think they will thereby be any thing the nearer getting rid of me. It is well known, and has ever been allowed to be one of the first and most established privileges and prerogatives of the crown, that his Majesty has a right to choose and nominate his own mi-

* Lord Hawkesbury.

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nisters: and with that conviction on my mind, I shall not be deterred from bringing forward such measures as may be necessary in aid and support of the present bill, which I have no doubt will meet the approbation of a considerable majority, notwithstanding all the opposition it has met with from the honourable gentleman on the opposite side of the house.

The motion for engrossing the bill was carried;

Ayes 265
Noes 223

February 11, 1805.

The order of the day being read, for taking into consideration the papers relative to the war with Spain,

Mr. Pitt rose, and addressed the house as follows:

I feel great satisfaction, Sir, that the day is at length arrived, when we can enter into that full and ample discussion of the papers before the house, which the magnitude of the subject requires; and though I am satisfied that a perusal of these papers, and an impartial consideration of the transactions to which they refer, would be sufficient to convince every rational mind of the rectitude of the measures pursued by his Majesty's government, and of the justice of the war in which we are engaged, yet, reflecting how much the complete illustration of the policy by which we have been guided, and the vindication of the steps which have been adopted, are necessary to the credit of his Majesty's government, and to the honour of the British nation, I trust I shall be excused if I go somewhat at length into a review of the different aspects of our relations, and the progress of the discussions with Spain previous to the war. In the course of what I shall have the honour to submit to the house, I hope that I shall be able, not only to establish that which I believe few can be now disposed to question, the ultimate justice and neces-

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city of the war; but also, the exemplary moderation, liberality, and forbearance of the ministers of this country in every period of our relation with Spain since the breaking out of the war with France; and when unexpected circumstances required the departure from the system of lenity which it was always the desire of the British government to exercise, that though they were not deficient in vigour to vindicate the rights, and to avenge the cause of the country, they never deviated from the law of nations or the principles of good faith.

In the first place, then, it is necessary to take into consideration the relative situation in which Spain stood towards this country at the breaking out of the war, in consequence of her antecedent engagements with France. I need hardly say more to characterize that situation, than barely mention the treaty of St. Ildefonso, and the stipulations it contained. Spain was bound to France by a treaty, on the face of it both offensive and defensive; and, in fact, a treaty which was by the contracting parties so intitled. Besides guaranteeing neutrality, their territories, &c. they agree to assist each other with 15 ships of the line, and 24,000 men; and this assistance, too, as appears from the 8th article, is to be given upon the demand of the requiring party, and the demand is to be taken as conclusive evidence of the necessity, precluding the party required from making any investigation or inquiry as to the justice of the war, or the policy of the object for which the succours were to be granted. Nay, by the 11th article of this treaty, the contracting parties are to assist each other with their whole forces, in case the stipulated succours should be insufficient. This treaty it is most important to keep in view, as the foundation of all the proceedings which it was thought incumbent on this government to adopt. The Spanish ambassador in this country, in several of the notes before the house, it will be seen, endeavours to set up his own, as appears too, in the first instance, unauthorised reasonings, to shew that this treaty was not offensive. To such reasonings I oppose the treaty itself, which expressly puts at the disposal of France the whole power and resources of the Spanish monarchy by sea and

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land; which strips Spain of the right to ask a question, or exercise any judgment as to the purpose of the succours she is to furnish. Such a treaty, unless distinctly disclaimed, I contend must *ipso facto* have rendered Spain a principal in the war. On the face of it such is the treaty of St. Ildefonso; and if any thing were wanting to explain its tendency, it would be the example of what happened in the year 1796, in which the offensive provisions were specifically directed against England. Indeed, who that recollects the circumstances in which the treaty was concluded, and when Spain was compelled to subscribe and ratify that record of her vassalage to France, can doubt the spirit of the contract, or its hostility to the British Nation?

Such was the situation in which his Majesty's ministers found themselves, when the aggressions and injustice of the present ruler of France forced them into the present rupture. This was the situation of the relations between both countries when his Majesty's ministers, actuated by sentiments which I cannot but applaud, resolved to delay their determination with respect to the light in which they should regard Spain, till they should see in what manner, and to what extent, Spain would be disposed to carry its observance of the terms of the treaty. In whatever light the treaty should be viewed, it could not be considered on the part of Spain, but as a reluctant tribute to the overbearing dictates of its ambitious and tyrannic ally; yet, while stipulations so directly hostile to the interests and security of this country remained in force, no man, I am confident, in this house, will deny, that it could be attributed only to extreme pusillanimity on the part of his Majesty's government, if they had not required the clear, distinct, and explicit renunciation of the offensive articles. But the feelings to which I have alluded, for the degraded and humiliating situation of that country, and which so justly influenced his Majesty's ministers on the occasion, dictated a spirit of moderation and forbearance in the measures they adopted with respect to a court, of which, though an enemy, I am not disposed to speak with severity, at the same time that I cannot but admit that in its present state it seems to

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possess very little of that honourable spirit, and those high-minded sentiments, by which the Spanish nation has been so long characterized. On this ground, I am convinced that the tenderness, moderation, and forbearance shewn by his Majesty's ministers, from the impulse of such generous sentiments, not upon any principles of true or sound policy, for the degrading situation to which necessity, not choice, had reduced Spain, will meet with the decided approbation of the house. I state this particularly, because it was, in the first instance, deemed expedient to gain time, and the Spanish court seemed as desirous to get rid of their engagements as we were to detach them from their ally. But, considering the situation in which Spain was placed, considering the situation and circumstances of Europe, considering also that the intemperate and precipitate conduct of the French ruler might compel Spain to take an active part with him in the war, the same sentiment to spare, the same generous feeling for its degraded situation, could no longer be suffered to influence his Majesty's government to a perseverance in the system of moderation upon which they had hitherto acted. To act longer upon such a system, under such discouraging circumstances, would not be to give way to the influence of generous sentiments, or honourable feelings, but to enable Spain, under the dictation of France, to accumulate resources, and armies, and fleets, and arsenals, to be at the disposal of France: and for what purpose? France might at once demand the contingent of 15 sail of the line, and 24,000 men; she could moreover demand, that Spain should put into activity the whole force that she could command. At any moment it was in the power of France to call for the whole, either of the treasure of Spain, or of the blood of her subjects, unless the contingent succours should be deemed sufficient: and for what purpose? The purpose of aiding the French in a war against this country; for a purpose announced at the very outset of the war, continued through every stage of its progress, and never once suspended, but in practice, for the purpose of destroying the power and independence of this country; for the purpose

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of overthrowing this noble barrier against the encroachments of French ambition on the liberties and independence of mankind. The duties of the ministers of this country were, by all these circumstances, rendered extremely delicate and difficult. Standing at the head of the affairs of a nation like this, to be at once moderate and forbearing towards Spain, and wise and provident to Great Britain; to feel and to vindicate the justice of their cause, yet to mitigate the rigour of justice, as far as true policy and the safety of the state would admit of, was indeed a trying situation, and required the utmost prudence; particularly when they were sensible that Spain might be pushed on to war with us, though ruin might be the consequence to her, provided her co-operation could in any manner facilitate the projects of the ruler of France for our destruction.

Having stated these general principles as applicable to the state of our relations with Spain, it remains to consider how they have been followed up. Gentlemen will see in the papers on the table the instructions by Lord Hawkesbury to our minister at Madrid, so far back as October 1802, instructions which I am confident all must approve. They will there see that the first object of our policy was, if possible, to detach Spain from her degrading connexion with France, and if that was impracticable, at least to endeavour, that, in case of any future war, either a system of neutrality should be settled, or at least that hostilities with her might be deferred as long as possible. It cannot be questioned these principles were acted upon by our minister, and that every effort was made to prepare the minds of the Spanish government for these alternatives. In June 1803, instructions were given to Mr. Frere to demand from the Spanish government a renunciation of the treaty of St. Ildefonso; nor will any man, I believe, dispute that the instructions to which I allude, as to the points to be insisted on, are fully justified by the law of nations.

It is needless for me to dwell upon the question, how far the limited succours in the treaty of St. Ildefonso, would have been consistent with the neutrality of Spain, as that makes no

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part of the case. I must say, however, that it never was admitted that we were bound to acquiesce in those succours being given: so that all arguments founded upon the commutation of assistance in kind into pecuniary aid are inapplicable, because, if we did not admit the one, we were certainly no way bound to acquiesce in the other. The conduct which a nation is bound to follow in the case of limited succour, furnished in pursuance of a defensive treaty, must depend upon the extent of the assistance; and that extent must be taken in proportion to the whole strength and resources of the nation furnishing. Much will depend, too, upon whether the treaty is recent or ancient, whether it is general in its provisions, or concluded with direct reference to hostilities with a particular state. His Majesty's government at the time wisely gave no opinion upon the question of limited succour in kind to be furnished by Spain to France, because that case did not occur. They did what was necessary for the protection of our interests, had it taken place, and the Spanish government were apprised that our forces would attack their auxiliary fleet, and prevent their junction with the enemy. That to do so would have been consistent with the clearest principles of the law of nations, and of self-defence, cannot admit of a dispute. But while the moderation of this country was unwilling to drive Spain into war, it was unquestionably necessary to obtain some pledge that the treaty of Ildefonso should not be acted upon. If they did not make it a specific ground of war, they were intitled to insist that its hostile principle should be abandoned. In the dispatches of Mr. Frere will be found the answer which he received to the applications he had made upon this subject, and in which he stated, that unless satisfactory explanations and assurances were given, the treaty of Ildefonso could not but be regarded as hostile. It was not till August that these dispatches reached this country. The answer of the prince of peace was vague and inconclusive, but still it evinced a disposition to delay, and, if possible, to elude compliance with the demands of France. Much ill humour existed in the court of Madrid against the latter, and an inclination to resist her domination seemed to prevail; while

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every disposition was manifested to give satisfaction to the just representations of this government. Things remained in this state till September; nor was it known here, at least, up to that time, that France had made a formal demand of the stipulated succours. At that period a note was presented by M. d'Anduaga, the Spanish minister here, in which he endeavours to prove that the treaty of St. Ildefonso contained nothing hostile to this country. And here I cannot but remark upon a whimsical circumstance in those reasonings of the Spanish ambassador. He endeavours to shew that the treaty in question was, in reality, two treaties, the one defensive, the other offensive, but applicable only to the case in which both France and Spain should, by common consent, enter into war against any other country. It so happens, however, that the first part of the treaty, which M. d'Anduaga contends to be defensive, is precisely that which contains the offensive provisions; and that part which he describes as offensive, is that which is defensive. For, under the first part is included the stipulation that Spain, in case the limited succours shall be insufficient, shall put her whole forces at the disposal of France; words which M. d'Anduaga argues do not mean that Spain shall join France with all her power, though words more synonymous I do not think it would be possible to select. This, however, by the way; and now to pursue the course of the negociation.

In September, a dispatch was received from Mr. Frere, dated in August, in which he announces that France had made a formal demand of the stipulated succours. Mr. Frere was then informed by the prince of peace, that, to preserve the neutrality of Spain, they were willing to make a pecuniary sacrifice. The demands of France were urgent; and Mr. Frere writes that a sum of not less than 250,000*l.* a month, or 3,000,000*l.* a year, were the terms; and though Spain had pleaded for a decrease, it appears to have been the sum settled, and indeed rather with increase than diminution. This event, in which the influence of France over Spain was so manifest, must have led ministers to conclude, that the hopes of the neutrality of Spain would prove

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visionary. Mr. Frere, in dispatches dated 12th of September, mentions, that the Spanish government, in answer to his remonstrances on this subject, had stated, that it was better for this country that they should make pecuniary sacrifice to preserve their neutrality, (though it appeared from every account, that this pecuniary commutation was no less than 3,000,000*l.*) than that they should have supplied the stipulated succours in kind, and a nominal declaration of war which must have ensued. This mode of reasoning is undoubtedly absurd and ridiculous, for how could the Spanish government have expected that this country would have considered the declaration merely nominal, and have abstained from active hostility? But I mention this, in order to shew that the Spanish government themselves, far from thinking even the limited succour consistent with neutrality, considered that at least a nominal declaration of war must be the inevitable consequence of supplying them. In a subsequent dispatch from Mr. Frere, dated 20th of September, he mentions, that he had heard that the subsidy demanded by France was 700,000*l.* a year, and that this was considered too much by Spain, who offered 600,000*l.* If then the Spanish government considered 700,000*l.* as excessive, is it not clear, by their own confession, that three millions was infinitely more than this country was bound to consider compatible with any principle of neutrality?

Nothing further of importance took place in the discussion except a note, respecting the passage of French seamen to Ferrol, to reinforce the crews of the fleet there;—a subject on which I forbear at present to comment. On the 9th of October, Mr. Frere writes, that the negociation with France was concluded. Mr. Frere, however, was unable to procure any official communication of the arrangement with France, though, from every information he could procure, it amounted to three millions sterling a year. What we know of that convention, however, is sufficient to stamp the conduct of Spain as hostile, and the refusal of a communication of its terms up to the very date of the rupture, was of itself sufficient to justify war. What we know, then,

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is itself a distinct and specific ground of war, unless it be contended, as I cannot suppose it will be in this house, that a war subsidy of three millions is not an infringement of neutrality, and does not render Spain a principal in the war. The Spanish government, indeed, all along contended, that the subsidy, the extent of which they refused to communicate, was only an equivalent for the succours stipulated; but we are not told, whether it was to be considered an equivalent for the limited, or for the unlimited succours. If to the latter, nothing can be more absurd; and, if as to the former, on what principles of calculation is the equivalent estimated? Under the name of an equivalent, any sum might have been paid. In different nations, different estimates of that equivalent would be formed. In this country, owing to circumstances connected with our prosperity, though sometimes burthensome in their operation, the pecuniary equivalent for military aid would be higher than in any other country, probably, in the world. What then might be the rated equivalent in England for fifteen sail of the line and twenty-four thousand land forces? At the highest estimate, the pay and charges for fifteen sail of the line for a twelvemonth, would not exceed one million, leaving two for the land forces. This would be allowing between 80*l.* or 90*l.* for every man. It is well known that this is infinitely beyond the allowance necessary in any service, or in any treaty. Of what is allowed as pecuniary commutation for service in kind, we may take an instance from the treaty between this country and Holland, in the year 1788, in which it is stipulated that between 8*l.* and 9*l.* shall be paid for each man in the infantry, and 11*l.* and 12*l.* for each man in the cavalry. By this calculation of equivalent, however, Spain pays between 80*l.* and 90*l.* for each man,—an allowance extravagant and unreasonable in the extreme. Can it be doubted, then, that a pecuniary subsidy, to the annual amount of three millions, made Spain a principal in the war, and could never be considered as a fair equivalent for any moderate extent of military assistance?

If this be the general principle, as it most unquestionably is, why did this government forbear to make it a ground of war?

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I have already touched upon the reasons. They believed that Spain rather submitted to adverse circumstances, than acted from choice. They believed that she looked to circumstances that might enable her to escape from the thraldom in which she was kept, and to pursue a course more suited to her interests and to her dignity. There were, indeed, circumstances in the state of Europe known to those at the head of affairs here, circumstances on which I cannot at present enlarge, which seemed to justify the hopes which Spain was naturally supposed to entertain, and which sufficiently account for the forbearance manifested by this government. It appearing, however, that nothing had actually been signed between France and Spain, instructions were, on the 24th of November, sent to Mr. Frere, in which he is authorised to declare to the Spanish government, that the acquiescence of his Majesty in the payment of a war subsidy to France, could be no more than a temporary connivance; that it must depend upon the amount of that subsidy, and the disposition of Spain in other respects to maintain a strict neutrality. Mr. Frere is instructed also to protest against the measure as hostile; and that forbearance of actual war could be continued on the expectation that the subsidy was to be temporary; and the most express reservation of our right to go to war is made. The Spanish government received distinct notice, that should his Majesty be induced to connive at the payment of a subsidy as a temporary measure, he would naturally look with the utmost jealousy to any naval preparations in the ports of Spain. A dispatch was received from Mr. Frere, on the 27th of December, announcing that the convention between France and Spain was finally concluded on the 19th of October. In this dispatch Mr. Frere informs this government, that he had represented the convention to M. Cevallos, as a war subsidy, which had given this country an undoubted right to go to war. On this occasion, M. Cevallos argues, that the limited succours had not been objected to, and adds that we ought not to complain of the pecuniary subsidy, because we did not know what it was. This reasoning of M. Cevallos is worthy of remark. When we urged a communication

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of the convention, we were told it was unnecessary, because, as it was an equivalent for the succours stipulated, we must know what it was: but when we complain of this payment to France as a war subsidy, we are answered "No, you have no reason of complaint, because you do not know what we pay." Thus, because the Spanish government wrongfully refuses the communication of a treaty, in which we are directly interested, we are to have no redress, nor must we be displeased when a subsidy is paid ten times the amount of any stipulated succours in kind, had the furnishing of these been admitted, as they were not, to be consistent with neutrality.

The first period of the negociation begins with the discussions respecting the treaty of Ildefonso; the second, with those respecting the convention of subsidy; the third era of the negociation commences with the instructions sent by Lord Hawkesbury to Mr. Frere after that convention was known to be concluded. Lord Hawkesbury, in his letter of the 21st January 1804, says distinctly, that the convention of the 19th October was a sufficient cause of war, but that, from views of forbearance and of policy, his Majesty was unwilling, yet, to act upon the right which that measure conferred, if satisfactory explanations can be obtained. Mr. Frere, therefore, was instructed to require explanations respecting the other stipulations of the convention of the 19th October, and, secondly, to obtain satisfaction as to naval preparations. The forbearance of ministers, therefore, is not founded either upon blindness to the danger which the future hostility of Spain, under the guidance of France, might produce, but upon motives of policy, adopting due precaution against that event. Their forbearance was conditional, and it required as a *sine quâ non*, that no naval preparations should be undertaken in the Spanish ports. Without this condition the generosity and the lenity of government would have been criminal, had there been any danger that Spain, besides contributing a pecuniary subsidy, would have made any preparations for co-operating with France, whenever the moment arrived, that her military aid would have been useful. When Mr. Frere received

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these instructions, he was engaged in a discussion respecting the sale of prizes, on which at a later period satisfaction was obtained, and also respecting armaments at Ferrol. As to these, he received assurances that no hostile armaments were going on in that port. Agreeably to his instructions, Mr. Frere proceeded to demand a communication of the convention of the 19th of October. Now, for the first time, however, the Spanish government began, in their turn, to demand an explanation of the intentions of Great Britain. Mr. Frere insisted, that a communication of the convention must be made preliminary to any agreement for the neutrality of Spain. On this, the prince of peace referred him to M. Cevallos, and nothing was obtained but vague assurances, that the treaty contained nothing hostile to the interests of this country. The reason, however, assigned for the refusal to communicate the treaty is peculiarly deserving of attention. It is expressly said that it had been proposed to communicate it, but "General Bournonville had over-ruled it." Here is evidence incontestable of the control exercised by the French over the Spanish government, evidence furnished inadvertently by the latter themselves. The court of Spain admit that the demand made by us was just, and they excuse themselves for non-compliance by an apology, of itself highly alarming, and affording the best criterion how precarious must be the reliance on the neutrality of Spain while the ascendancy of France continued. That we had a right to the communication of a treaty, in which we were so nearly interested, I believe no man will dispute. And can it be contended that we ought to have acquiesced in that refusal, without at the same time saying that we ought to abandon whatever is most essential to the assertion of our dignity, and the maintenance of our rights? In vain is it contended that the connivance of this government in the neutrality of Spain was an acknowledgement of it. On the contrary, in every one of his notes and conferences Mr. Frere studiously reserved the right of this country to go to war, and accurately distinguished between temporary connivance and positive recognition. The connivance too was conditional. It depended on the communi-

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cation of the treaty with France, on the discontinuance of all naval armaments, and the prohibition of the sale of prizes in Spanish ports. That the Spanish government were aware that their neutrality was not recognized, is obvious from the discussions which took place, and from their anxiety to learn what were our intentions.

It appears that some mistake has occurred from the use of the word *convention*, in some of the Spanish notes, as if there had been a convention of neutrality between this country and Spain. It is plain, however, that the word refers in most cases to the convention with France; though, to be sure, it is not surprising it should be thought that such a convention as that was, could not be meant to be characterized as a convention of neutrality. And here, Sir, I may take notice of a circumstance that escaped me in a former part of my speech. Let us consider what proportion of the whole revenue of Spain the subsidy paid to France forms. It will be found, I believe, that as the whole revenue of Spain, for every purpose, is not estimated at more than eight millions, the subsidy is between one third and one half of its pecuniary resources. And is not that a strange sort of neutrality, in which one power contributes near a half of its whole annual revenue to another power, to carry on war against a third? If the proportion of aid in a defensive treaty is a consideration of great importance in deciding whether it is to be deemed a violation of neutrality, surely the proportion of a pecuniary commutation to the whole means of a state, is not to be held indifferent. Suppose, for instance, that Prussia or Austria were engaged in a war with France, would it be considered a convention of neutrality, if England were to stipulate and pay fifteen millions to one of the belligerents? And fifteen millions paid by England probably forms no larger proportion of her means, than three millions annually paid by Spain to France—and by a convention so ridiculously described as a convention of neutrality! It is evident, however, that M. d'Anduaga, who, in a note presented to this government, speaks of a convention of neutrality of the 19th of October between Spain and England, is altogether

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unacquainted with the progress and state of the negociation. It is clear, that no such treaty ever did exist, for if it had, would M. Cevallos, in February and March, have talked of the understanding which prevailed on the subject, if they could at once have settled the dispute by referring to the written document? But in my view of the subject, it would have been of little consequence whether such a convention had existed or not. It is manifest that it could have recognized the neutrality of Spain only conditionally, and if the condition was violated, the neutrality of course expired, and we should have been placed in the same right of war that belonged to us prior to its conclusion. But still, though ministers were disposed to prolong their forbearance and lenity, no satisfaction was obtained as to the communication of the treaty. Desirous, however, of affording every facility, and removing every obstacle to an amicable arrangement, it was resolved to recall Mr. Frere, in consequence of circumstances having occurred, that made it impossible for him any longer to communicate personally with the prince of peace. Upon the nature of that difference, which has no relation to the present subject, it is not necessary for me to enlarge. In justice to Mr. Frere, however, I must say, that it arose without any fault on his part, from a most unprovoked, unwarrantable conduct in that person, who, though without ostensible office, is known to have the most leading influence in the councils of Spain. Nevertheless, much as ministers respected the talents and were sensible of the services of that gentleman who had so ably filled the place of ambassador to the court of Madrid, during a difficult and critical period, they were determined that no collateral obstacles should stand in the way of a friendly termination of discussions, in which the public interest was so much concerned. They had reasons of policy for not driving matters precipitately to extremity, and reserving the right of war, should circumstances demand its exercise, they continued to leave an opening for conciliation and arrangement.

It was intended to send another gentleman to succeed Mr. Frere, the latter returning home on leave of absence. The same vessel,

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however, which brought Mr. Frere home on the 17th of September, brought letters from Admiral Cochrane, which proved in the clearest manner the violation of that condition, on which the forbearance of his Majesty's government had particularly been founded. That the clear and precise information communicated by Admiral Cochrane, proved, that a violation of the condition on which the neutrality of Spain was connived at, had been committed by the armaments in the port of Ferrol, and that it was incumbent on government to act upon it, I think cannot be denied. The dispatches of Admiral Cochrane pointed out many important facts. The preparations in the ports of Spain were collateral with the equipment of the French squadron and the Dutch men of war: they happened at the moment when French sailors and soldiers were conveyed through Spain to reinforce the crews of the French ships; the packets were armed as in time of war. After our forbearance, so long founded on the express condition, that no armaments were to be undertaken in the Spanish ports, could the government of this country shut its eyes to an armament begun in circumstances so suspicious; or ought they to have so far forgot their duty as to neglect the precautions which the case demanded? After Spain had been warned in what light an armament would be viewed, and of the consequences to which it would lead, what would have been thought of the vigour or good sense of ministers, had they, on this occasion, taken no steps in consequence of such information? What would have been said if the enemy, joining their forces, had come out of Ferrol, and proved too strong for the squadron under Admiral Cochrane? though that I do not believe, notwithstanding any difference of numerical strength, would have happened. What would have been said, if the treasure-ships had arrived safe, and replenished with dollars the coffers of Spain, to be placed at the disposal of France, and employed for our destruction? What would have been said, had the Ferrol squadron proceeded to any enterprise that would either have struck a blow at our interests, or facilitated those plans which the enemy meditated against this country? If any of these things had happened,

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what defence could ministers urge this day for their negligence, their weakness, and their pusillanimity? I believe they would have been universally and deservedly condemned, not only at home, but in every quarter of Europe and the world, where honourable, sound, and patriotic principles have still any influence on the views, wishes, and sentiments of mankind.

I cannot believe that any man in this nation would ever have thought otherwise than with horror and detestation of the continuance of forbearance in such a posture of affairs; but if, contrary to my belief, there were majorities to applaud forbearance, I declare to you, Sir, and to this house, that there is no censure which I should not be proud to receive, rather than the praise of men, who could applaud such forbearance, or could even praise hesitation at a moment, such as that of the receipt in this country of the decisive, and positive, and most unequivocal intelligence from Admiral Cochrane, of the armaments in the ports of Spain. Men might argue, however, that the intelligence itself was not of such a nature, as that a wise and reflective government ought to have adopted it, so as to determine them to take measures of precaution, indicative of ultimate war. I know the intelligence has been questioned; but I do also know, that it has been questioned without cause. All the circumstances that have come within my knowledge, only confirm the truth and accuracy of that intelligence beyond the possibility of doubt. The single thing against it, to which weight is attached, is that of the circumstance of a piece of news, given by M. d'Anduaga, in one of his notes, the last indeed to the British government. M. d'Anduaga, when first he received the intelligence of the seizure of the frigates of his nation, addressed a note to the secretary of state for foreign affairs, in which he states, that a colonel of the regiment of Hibernia had received letters from some officers of his regiment at Ferrol, stating that the armament preparing in that harbour, of which his regiment was a part, was destined to go against the insurgents in Biscay. I do not know what gentlemen think of such information. I will not disparage the authors of it; but most certainly I am of opinion

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that information from a British admiral is higher authority than the information from the Hibernian colonel. As to the assemblage and arming at Ferrol, it is more probable, however, that they were originally intended for a secret expedition of some sort, but that when it became known that Biscay was in a disturbed state, as the troops could not be spared for a secret expedition, they were ordered to be landed, and received a destination altogether remote from that which was assigned them under the plan which had led to their assemblage. If it was otherwise, it never occurred to the governor of Gallicia to tell admiral Cochrane, when this officer wrote to him for explanation, that the armament at Ferrol was destined to act against the Biscayans. The evidence of the governor of Gallicia, set against that of the correspondent of the Hibernian colonel, would surely weigh somewhat in the minds of gentlemen. If the information of the colonel had any effect at all, it must have been on the English newspapers, or on some persons out of the government. On this subject the evidence of the governor of Gallicia is conclusive. This person, in answer to the first letter of admiral Cochrane, demanding explanations of the armaments in the ports of Ferrol, replies, that it was an arming of some vessels for a secret expedition, and not that it was an expedition destined against the insurgents of Biscay. Mr. Frere stated at Madrid his apprehensions respecting that armament, to which M. Cevallos makes no other answer, than that they were not intended to hurt us; not that they were collected in order to quell the revolt of the subjects of Spain. With respect to the real views of the court of Madrid, in the first agitation of the plan of her armament in the harbour of Ferrol, it must strike every body, therefore, that the persons the most likely to know, either gave them quite a different destination from that insisted on by M. d'Anduaga, or refused to give any satisfactory account whatever of their destination. It was not until after the receipt of those dispatches of M. d'Anduaga, in which the report occurs of the justification set up by him of the conduct of his court, that either M. Cevallos, or the governor of Gallicia says that their

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object was to quell an insurrection in Biscay; and it will doubtless strike the house, that the justification by M. d'Anduaga was gratuitous, in other words, was a justification, the production of his own mind, and not in any sense founded on the instructions from his court: and, indeed, there are but too many reasons to think that the armament was in the utmost degree hostile in its principle. It was scarcely possible that it could be at first intended to act against the revolted province. What appears to me, Sir, unavoidable to our viewing it in any other light is, that the preparations for it should have been throughout of a pacific complexion, of a spirit and tendency in the highest degree neutral. If the force had been wanted to quell an insurrection in Biscay, and that it had been proper to have sent such force by sea, Spain had abundance of small craft in which to transport her troops; and such she would have been bound to have chosen, if her purpose was what she had finally stated it to be; thereby avoiding all appearance of hostility. In the second place, if she must employ her ships of war, what was more obviously likely to have been her course, than to have taken out their guns, and armed her vessels *en flute*; and not have ranged them alongside the French and Dutch ships in her hostile harbour of Ferrol? Add to this, that Spain has no ports, or none at which she could, with any hope of safety, land troops in Biscay. But where and when was Spain to land her troops, if we grant, for the sake of the argument, that such was her intention? Why, Sir, in the Bay of Biscay;—that bay, incomparably the most tempestuous in Europe; and in this bay, the dread of the hardiest mariners, she was to land her troops, in the midst of the equinoxial gales!

As to the other documents which have been laid before the house, which may be supposed to affect the information received from admiral Cochrane, undoubtedly, Sir, in a statement from our consul at Cadiz, it is reported that there were, at the period he wrote, no armaments going on there. But two naval officers, one of them captain Gore, writing on the 5th of October, reports very differently. Still the information from our

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consul might very well have been such as to give an idea that there were no armaments, or none that were considerable, going forward, at the time when he was drawing up that information. For myself, I have no doubt in my mind of the existence of the armaments in question. In order to demonstrate to us the hostile dispositions of the court of Madrid, one circumstance, which though minute, was important.—I allude, to the arming of the packets. To dispose of all this, I contend, that the evidence, so distinct, clear, and positive of admiral Cochrane, is supported by the very excuses and arguments of the Spanish government. Besides, had we not the evidence of their being armed, in the information of the governor of Gallicia of a subsequent disarmament? This gentleman's information was material in another view; he told us, that they were not any longer armed ships of war, yet that the packets would remain armed. Thus, however *real* her armament, her disarmament was *nominal*. Now it cannot be said, that the condition of our neutrality or forbearance was, that she should not arm, nor make any armaments in her ports. How is the fact? Why, Sir, an armament took place in a quarter most material for us to insist on her being disarmed, and that was in the port of Ferrol, where the gallantry of our seamen detained, in a state of blockade, a squadron of France. The acquisition to this squadron, of a considerable Spanish force, might have occasioned not a little inconvenience. Certainly it would have obliged us to reinforce our blockading squadron; and possibly it would have been, in some respect, the means of causing a disadvantageous change of the positions of our general naval forces. All this, surely, was evidence of a hostile mind. That armament took place after a positive engagement with us not to make any armaments whatever. In these circumstances, what was the conduct of the court of Spain? Days and weeks elapse without one order, account, or explanation from that court to its minister M. d'Anduaga, to remove, at the court of England, those just apprehensions, jealousies, and unavoidable inquietudes, which the known proceedings at Ferrol were, of necessity, to create.

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The same with respect to Mr. Frere, at Madrid. Not one word of explanation was given to our chargé d'affaires, of the nature or object of these armaments; but he was told, generally, but most evasively, that they were not intended to hurt Great Britain. This idle jargon continued to be the language of the Spanish minister, until they received the intelligence from the governor of Gallicia of the dextrous attempt of M. d'Anduaga, to persuade our court that the armaments were for quelling the rebellion of Biscay. M. d'Anduaga's own dispatches arriving, informed the ministers of Spain more particularly of the colour their ambassador had given to the transaction. Yet, when we know, Sir, that the same governor of Biscay did at the outset, when not furnished with the ingenious but unavailing excuses of M. d'Anduaga, inform us, that the expedition was a secret one, shall we be amused out of the conviction of our understanding? If any man should believe M. d'Anduaga, with the evidence now before us, it will exceed my imagination of puerile credulity.

But, Sir, I do not believe that it will be advanced by any man in this house, that there were not armaments in the ports of Spain; nor can I see how those armaments can be accounted for, but on the principle of a hostile disposition. As to the armaments in other respects, I have only stated what was done. The simple question in reference to our moderation towards Spain, is not whether we did not do enough, but whether we did not do too much; whether we did not remit our due vigour and decision in not declaring war on the instant? If we had at once declared war, it would have been consistent with substantial justice. As it was, our reservation amounted to a pointed and conditional declaration of war. A breach of neutrality was declared actual hostility. By this conditional declaration of war, if circumstances should arise, we were entitled to act at once; so that when we knew of the hostile preparations and armaments in the ports of Spain, we were justified instantly to declare war; because, if we could prevent the treasures of that power from reaching in safety her ports, we should be preventing

RHODES HOUSE OXFORD Digitized by Google

a junction of the forces of the three powers, of Spain France, and Holland,—the succouring of an inveterate enemy,— the replenishing of his coffers, or the recruiting of his armies: for, assuredly, these treasures were not destined for the coffers of Spain, but for those of France. Even in this proceeding, the moderation and friendly dispositions of his Majesty's government were as obvious as unequivocal. We detained the frigates of Spain, indeed, but, by the mode of that detention, we left a door open to Spain to return to her ancient friendships, to the line of her generous and magnanimous policy in better days, to the course of her high-minded, honourable propensities and feelings, to her true interests, to the paths of her renown and her glory.

Now, if we did not at once declare war against Spain, knowing the motives of our unparalleled forbearance, I think it too hard, Sir, for gentlemen to charge us with the contravention of the law of nations, with want of good faith, or the violation of the most liberal, enlightened principles of a just and prudent policy. It will be found that we have treated Spain with a kindness, of which, perhaps, no epoch of history can furnish an instance. We carried our indulgence to the utmost extent. We were not, to the last moment, hostile, but to an extent singularly limited; and although Spain was giving every kind of assistance to her ally; although, joined with naval force, she was pouring her treasures into her coffers,—still we were willing to listen to her ministry, and, if possible, to avert from her the evils of war. Has Spain requited our friendship? With the two conditions on which our forbearance could be continued, on which she could be permitted to maintain her neutrality, she refused to comply. These were, first, the cessations of all armaments; and, secondly, the communications of the terms of the treaty of St. Ildefonso. We did not demand more than was necessary to our safety. We demanded nothing but our confirmed right. If we had not insisted on this promptly, and made it a *sine quâ non*, we might, indee , have been accused of weakness, of pusillanimity, and imbecility. Af er long concealing her ar-

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maments in other ports, Spain evinced, besides, a determination to refuse an explanation of those, and of what we alike required, the treaty of 1795. From these circumstances war had become inevitable. This was the case long before the affair of the frigates. In fact, their seizure was not known at the time of the discussion at Madrid, or of the notification of the 7th of November. As to the detention of the frigates, the irrefragable justice of that measure must be obvious to the world. That circumstance, however, makes no part of the case, and we should equally have been at war, had it never taken place. I do not say this to extenuate that proceeding, of which I trust I have already said enough completely to justify it. Deplorable as some of the circumstances were with which it was attended, as indeed bloodshed, though shed even in lawful war, must always be regretted, yet that occurrence certainly had no influence on the final decision of the question of peace or war.

I trust, Sir, that I have sufficiently proved that, even in the commencement of the negociations, we had a just cause of war, which never was abandoned; that, during the second period, our forbearance, while Spain became bound, and actually paid a war subsidy of three millions sterling to France, was conditional; and that the condition being violated, we again were possessed of the right of war provisionally declared; and all our demands of satisfaction and security being rejected, we are in consequence at open war. Under these circumstances, I entertain a full confidence that the vote of this house will recognise the justice of our cause, and sanction the conduct of the government, and that we shall lay at the foot of the throne the professions of a dutiful and loyal people, determined to make every sacrifice in the vindication of their rights, and in the defence of their country.

I shall conclude, Sir, with moving, "That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, to acquaint his Majesty, that we have taken into our most serious consideration the papers which have been laid before us by his Majesty's command, relative to the discussions which have taken place with the court of Spain:

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That we observe with the greatest satisfaction, that, through the whole of the transaction, his Majesty has carried his moderation and forbearance to the utmost extent which was consistent with a due regard to the honour of his crown, and the interests of his dominions: That, while we fully concur in the propriety and necessity of those prompt and vigorous measures of precaution which his Majesty found himself compelled to adopt, in consequence of the naval armaments fitted out by Spain, we see at the same time a fresh proof of his Majesty's earnest desire to avoid, if possible, the extremity of war, in the first opportunity which he even then offered to the court of Spain, to enter on pacific negociation: And that, impressed with these sentiments, and fully convinced of the justice of the war, which the conduct of the court of Spain (evidently under the influence and controul of France) has rendered unavoidable, we shall not fail to afford his Majesty our most zealous and cordial support in every measure which may be necessary for prosecuting the war with vigour, and bringing it to a safe and honourable termination.

A very long discussion succeeded; in the course of which Mr. Grey moved an amendment upon the address, to the effect of censuring the conduct of ministers throughout the negociation.

At a late hour the debate was adjourned to the following day, when the original motion was carried,

Ayes	313
Noes	106

April 8, 1805.

MR. Whitbread this day brought forward his promised motion founded on the tenth report of the Commissioners of Naval Inquiry; concluding a speech of great length with moving the following resolutions:

1. "That it appears to this committee, that on the 18th of June, 1782, the House of Commons in a committee of the whole house came, amongst others, to the following resolutions:

'That it is the opinion of this committee, that some regulations ought to 'be adopted for the purpose of lessening and keeping down the balances of 'public money, which appear to have usually been in the hands of the trea-

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'surer of the navy; and it would be beneficial to the public if the first and 'other clerks in the different branches belonging to the said office, were paid 'by fixed and permanent salaries in lieu of all fees, gratuities, and other 'perquisites whatsoever.'

'That it is the opinion of this committee, that from henceforward the pay-'master-general of his Majesty's land forces, and the treasurer of the navy, 'for the time being, shall not apply any sum or sums of money imprested to 'them, or either of them, to any purpose of advantage or interest to them-'selves, either directly or indirectly.'

'That it appears to this committee, that the commissioners appointed to 'examine, take, and state the public accounts of the kingdom, have, so far 'as appears from the reports which they have hitherto made, discharged the 'duty intrusted to them with great diligence, accuracy, and ability: and if 'parliament shall carry into execution those plans of reform and regulation 'which are suggested by the matter contained in the reports of the said com-'missioners, it cannot but be attended with the most beneficial consequences 'to the future welfare and prosperity of this kingdom.'

2. "That in furtherance of the intention of the House of Commons expressed in such resolutions, his Majesty, by his warrant dated June 26th, 1782, directed that the salary of the treasurer of the navy should be increased to the sum of 4000*l.* per annum, in full satisfaction of all wages, and fees, and other profits and emoluments theretofore enjoyed by former treasurers.

3. "That it appears to this committee, that during the treasurership of the right honourable Isaac Barré, the conditions of the aforesaid warrant were strictly complied with; that the whole of the money issued from the exchequer to Mr. Barré for naval services was lodged in the bank; that it was never drawn from thence previously to its being advanced to the sub-accountants, to be applied to the public service; that during the time Mr. Barré acted as treasurer and ex-treasurer, he had not in his possession or custody any of the public money, and that neither he nor the paymaster of the navy did derive any profit or advantage from the use or employment thereof.

4. "That the Right honourable Henry Dundas, now lord Viscount Melville, succeeded to the office of treasurer of the navy on the 19th of August, 1782, when a further addition was made to the salary of the said office, in order to produce a net annual income of 4000*l.* after the payment of all taxes and charges on the same: and that this additional salary was considered by the said Lord Viscount Melville as granted to him in lieu of all wages, fees, profits, and other emoluments, enjoyed by former treasurers.

5. "That the said Lord Viscount Melville continued in the said office till the 10th of April, 1783; that being asked whether he derived any advantage from the use of the public money during that period, he, in his examination before the commissioners of Naval Inquiry, declined answering any question

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on that head, but that he has since, in a letter written to the said commissioners, and dated the 28th of March last, declared that previous to 1786, 'he did not derive any advantage from the use or employment of any monies issued for carrying on the service of the navy;' but Mr. Douglas, who was paymaster, being dead, and his lordship having refused to answer any question on this head as aforesaid, no evidence has been obtained as to the application of monies issued for the service of the navy, or the mode of drawing the same from the bank during this period.

6. "That the honourable C. Townshend, now Lord Bayning, held the office of treasurer of the navy, from the 11th of April, 1783, to the 4th of January, 1784, and that from the examination of his lordship, it appears that, during his treasurership, no part of the money issued for the service of the navy was applied to his private use or advantage, and that he does not believe that Mr. Douglas, who acted under him as paymaster, derived any profit or advantage from the use or employment of the public money except the money issued for the payment of exchequer fees.

7. "That the right honourable Henry Dundas was re-appointed treasurer of the navy on the 5th of January, 1784, and continued in the said office until the 1st of June, 1800.

8. "That in the year 1785, an act of parliament was passed, 25 Geo. III. chap. 31. intituled, 'An Act for better regulating the office of treasurer of his Majesty's Navy;' whereby it is directed, that no money shall be issued from the treasury to the treasurers of the navy; but that all monies issued for naval services shall be paid to the bank on account of naval services, and placed to the account of the treasurer of the navy, and shall not be paid out of the bank unless for naval services, and in pursuance of draughts signed by the treasurer, or some person or persons authorized by him; which draughts shall specify the heads of service to which such sums are to be applied, and that the regulations under the said act shall take place from the 31st of July, 1785.

9. "That the execution of the said act was postponed till the month of January, 1786, and, from that time till the month of June, 1800, when Lord Melville left the office of treasurer, contrary to the practice established in the treasurership of the right honourable Isaac Barré, contrary to the resolutions of the House of Commons of 18th of June, 1782, and in defiance of the provisions of the above-mentioned act of the 25th of George III. chap. 31. large sums of money were, under pretence of naval services, and by a scandalous evasion of the act, at various times drawn from the bank and invested in exchequer and navy bills, lent upon the security of stock, employed in discounting private bills, in purchasing bank and East-India stock, and used in various ways for the purposes of private emolument.

10. "That Alexander Trotter, Esq. paymaster of the navy, was the per-

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son by whom, or in whose name, the public money was thus employed, and that in so doing he acted with the knowledge and consent of Lord Viscount Melville; to whom he was at the same time private agent, and for whose use or benefit he occasionally laid out from 10 to 20,000*l.* without considering whether he was previously in advance to his lordship, and whether such advances were made from his public or private balances.

11. "That the right honourable Lord Viscount Melville having been privy to, and connived at the withdrawing from the bank of England, for purposes of private interest or emolument, sums issued to him as treasurer of the navy, and placed to his account in the bank, according to the provisions of the 25th Geo. III. chap. 31. has been guilty of a gross violation of the law, and a high breach of duty.

12. "That it further appears, that, subsequent to the appointment of Lord Melville, as treasurer of the navy, in 1784, and during the time he held that office, large sums of money issued for the service of the navy, were applied to other services; and that the said Lord Melville, in a letter, written in answer to a precept issued by the commissioners of Naval Inquiry, requiring an account of money received by him, or any person on his account, or by his order, from the paymaster of the navy, and also of the time when, and the persons by whom the same were returned to the banks, or paymaster, has declared, that he has no materials by which he could make up such an account, and that if he had materials, he could not do it without disclosing delicate and confidential transactions of government, which his duty to the public must have restrained him from revealing.

13. "That Lord Melville, in applying monies issued for the service of the navy to other services, stated to have been of so delicate and confidential a nature, that, in his opinion, no account can or ought to be given of them, has acted in a manner inconsistent with his duty, and incompatible with those securities which the legislature has provided for the proper application of the public money."

On the question being put on the first resolution, Mr. PITT rose:

Sir,—The honourable gentleman* began his speech with professing an intention to submit the subject now under consideration to the house, without indulging in violent or inflammatory topics, and I am willing to allow that in the former part of it he adhered to his resolutions; but I am sorry that in the conclusion it seems to have been altogether forgotten. In that part of his discourse, instead of addressing you with that calmness and moderation which best become a criminal accusation,

* Mr. Whitbread.

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he appealed to the passions of his audience, and endeavoured to make an impression by the introduction of matter that could tend only to abuse the feelings and mislead the judgment. He artfully drew a picture of the burthens, under which the people of this country laboured, and connected with them the supposition that these burthens might have been increased by the practices on which he has expatiated. Now, Sir, in order to be entitled to employ such arguments, it is necessary to prove that such an aggravation of the alleged misconduct has actually existed. If it shall appear that any irregularities or malversations have taken place, I admit that they are proper subjects of parliamentary discussion, but I must reprobate any attempt to mislead the house or the public, by clamours about losses which have never been incurred, inconveniences which have never been felt, and an increase of public burthen which has never been experienced. In point of fact there is no allegation in the report, or even in the speech of the honourable gentleman, that any losses to the public have been sustained; there is no allegation that any defalcation, any mischief, any evil whatever, has accrued to the nation by the transactions now in question. [A loud and tumultuous cry of "Hear! hear!" from the other side.] To what am I to impute this vociferation? I hope it is not intended to suppress, by clamours like these, that freedom of speech that should prevail in this house, particularly on so solemn an occasion as this, though I cannot but consider it a bad omen of fair and impartial examination, that I am interrupted in this manner; I cannot, however, suffer myself to be interrupted. To inflame the passions of men who are called on to pronounce upon guilt or innocence, according to the result of investigation, is inconsistent with every principle of justice; and I cannot help observing that the honourable gentleman has endeavoured to give a certain degree of countenance to a species of misrepresentation of the most dangerous nature, which has been with uncommon assiduity circulated out of doors. I allude to the insinuations that the seamen of the navy, by the circumstances on which the honourable gentleman has

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commented, have been prevented from obtaining the due rewards of their toils and dangers. Such representations are destitute of all foundation, and I have no doubt that the brave and meritorious class of men, to whom they are directed, will reject them with indignation and disdain.

I must complain too, that the honourable gentleman has attempted to give a view of the case altogether erroneous, when he calls upon the house to pass sentence, as upon persons already tried and convicted. He has told us that Lord Melville, and every other person implicated in the transactions detailed in the tenth report, had an opportunity of being fairly tried, and that questions were put to them by which they might have proved their innocence. Now, I must confidently maintain, that, whatever inferences gentlemen may think themselves justified in drawing from the statements in the tenth report, it cannot be called any thing but a trial. What in all judicial proceedings, particularly according to the constitution of this country, so much the object of panegyric, constitutes the essence of fair trial, but that the party should know the charge made against him; that he should hear, and be allowed to cross-examine the evidence; that he should be allowed to state his defence, and support it by evidence, and overthrow the accusation by new evidence and further explanation; and, above all, that he should never be compelled to criminate himself? In this case, however, every thing is absent that is essential to fair trial; a knowledge of the charge, opportunity to hear and controvert the evidence, &c. &c. are absent, and that alone is present which, by law, is inconsistent with fair trial, namely, that the party is supposed to criminate himself. Here the parties are examined as to their own guilt, without being acquainted with the charge; they are questioned as to facts, without knowing to what end their answers are to be employed; they are not suffered to produce evidence in their exculpation, nor permitted fully to meet specific charges.—Besides, too, the very materials of which the report is composed, are not necessarily such as to enable the house to understand them so fully, as to allow them to pronounce an impartial and

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intelligent decision. I admit at the same time that the subject is one of a most grave and solemn nature, and that, although no loss nor even inconvenience can be alleged to have arisen from the transactions that have taken place, yet, if, in a great money department, irregularities have been committed, it may be the duty of the house to set a mark upon such proceedings. But whether in this case it be fit to do so, must depend upon the consideration of all the circumstances, which at present are not before us in the report. Till all those circumstances are investigated and ascertained, the house cannot be in a situation to form a fair opinion of the matter, far less can it be justified in coming to any vote of censure. I felt this before I came into the house this day, and the speech of thehonourable gentleman has confirmed my opinion. The statements of the report are founded on documents which I defy any man to say do positively and of themselves prove that any man is criminal, far less can they enable us to ascertain the quantum of demerit, or the degree of severity with which it should be stigmatized. Such is the judgment I formed upon looking at the report itself; far more must it be impossible for us to decide fairly now, when many of the honourable gentleman's arguments are founded upon the complicated materials of accounts, very difficult even for the most skilful accountant to unravel, and which in one day cannot even be examined. Surely then the honourable gentleman calls upon us for sentence long before the cause is ripe for it.

The honourable gentleman, it is to be observed, though he opened the case with three charges, gradually varied his ground, and at last concluded with telling us that he should call for the opinion of the house this night only upon one. Yet he admitted that the whole case was connected. What he proposed to postpone, or abandon, or change, he still pressed into the service as suspicion. This course, however, I am persuaded the house will by no means countenance. As to the point, whether Lord Melville participated in the profit of money employed for private advantage, I think it would have been more becoming had the honourable gentleman, instead of bringing it in as matter of

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aggravation, stated it as a separate charge, because that is the point which must most nearly touch the feelings of all who are concerned in his lordship's reputation, of all who feel any interest in the fate of men standing upon the trial of their guilt or innocence. I readily agree that the subject is one which deserves the most serious attention of the house: it is one which I am desirous they should investigate in the amplest manner, and that should be put in that train of examination which will enable us speedily to form such a judgment as duty and honour require. But the materials before us, particularly as applicable to the charges now made, are not sufficient to enable us to pronounce. I am sensible that there are many points that ought to be farther inquired into; there are various points in which manifest errors exist. My object therefore is, that a speedy and complete investigation should take place.

The first charge dwelt upon by the honourable gentleman, though not that on which he calls for an immediate resolution, is, that certain sums of money were applied to other than naval services. On this head I must say, that the whole case is not before us. Will the house be contented to pass judgment on the naked unexplained fact? Will they refuse to inquire what were the circumstances under which this application took place? Can it be denied that such a fact may exist in a vast variety of shades; that it may have been wanton, or it may have been necessary, that it may have been great or small, that it may have been done upon a responsibility by which the public cause was benefited in a most important manner? Will the house then refuse to inquire into those circumstances? Will they refuse to ascertain in what light the affair deserves to be viewed?—This surely must be obvious to every gentleman who hears me, and I put the case to shew how absolutely necessary it is that a farther inquiry should take place, before we proceed farther or pronounce any decision. In pursuing this statement I am satisfied that a select committee of this house is best calculated to prosecute such farther investigation as will prepare the house for an impartial decision. Allusion has been made to this

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transaction, and the name of a right honourable friend of mine* is mentioned in the report as having re-paid to the treasurer of the navy certain sums lent by that department for other public services. I must state freely, then, that I should be ashamed to say that I was ignorant of such a transaction having occurred. I should, on the contrary, be inclined to give to the house an account of the circumstances of the affair, its consequences to the public service, and, conscious of having been actuated by no motive but an honest zeal for the public, I should have no hesitation to submit to the judgment of the house a transaction which, irregular and illegal as it may be, originated in no sinister views; and in their decision I should humbly acquiesce, whether it were of praise or censure. I am confident that the sum in question was repaid, without loss or inconvenience to any department; and I can add too, that its application was under such circumstances as it would have been improper to disclose, for a considerable period at least after they had happened. I can say likewise, that the sum of 40,000*l.* was two-thirds of the whole sum at any time diverted in this manner; and if there was no abuse or misapplication in this instance, I think it forms a sufficient presumption against any misapplication by Lord Melville in those other departments where he resided, and to the use of which the honourable gentleman thinks he might have, at his own discretion, diverted other sums. As to the charge of Lord Melville conniving at Mr. Trotter's turning the public money to his own advantage, I beg to have it understood, that when properly investigated and all the circumstances explained, I am not inclined to say that conniving at the application of the public money for the purpose even of an innocent profit to individuals, without actual loss to the state, is altogether to be justified. But our judgment will depend upon a complete knowledge of all the circumstances—will depend upon an inquiry into the mode of its employment, the probable danger, and the amount. The commissioners of naval inquiry, however, do not say that the issues of the treasurer or paymaster of the navy were greater than necessary, or that the money

* Mr. Long.

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imprested in his hands was not forth-coming whenever it was wanted. In fact, nothing could accelerate those issues in such a manner as to increase the balance in the paymaster's hands at pleasure.

As to the risk to which the money employed by Mr. Trotter was exposed, it certainly does not appear that Lord Melville had any knowledge how it was applied. The honourable gentleman selects from a voluminous body of accounts, equally intricate and difficult to unravel, a variety of items, to shew that it was vested in different denominations of stock; but he does not attempt to shew that any loss or inconvenience arose to the public. I do not say indeed that the mere circumstance of no loss having accrued is a justification; but if no loss did arise, it is a sufficient presumption that no great risk was incurred. Under these circumstances it appears that many points stated in the report demand elucidation; and when I state one or two material errors, I am satisfied the house will see the impropriety of deciding upon evidence so imperfect. In their report the commissioners notice a circumstance to which they attach considerable importance. They observe that considerable sums came into Messrs. Coutts's hands without passing through the bank; and they insinuate they know not with what abuses or further risks this was connected. The sum which they suppose might have come into Mr. Trotter's account at Coutts's, without passing through the bank, they estimate at six millions, and they exemplify one million paid in on a particular day. Now, I am informed, that in point of fact the million in question did come from the bank, that it was drawn by a draft under one of the regular heads of service, and brought by one of the clerks or messengers of the office to Messrs. Coutts, and it was all paid away in the course of a few days, having been destined to meet a certain number of navy bills then in the course of payment. This fact of itself overthrows the statement of the commissioners, and affords a fair presumption that in other points their representations would be corrected by further inquiry.

With respect to the balance at any time in the hands of Messrs.

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Coutts, it is not easy, perhaps, to be ascertained; but even though the principle of placing it in any private banker's hands, is not altogether to be justified, yet it must be material to know, if it was kept there from the greater facility of the current payments of the office. It is clear that at all events money must be drawn in the gross from the bank, to be paid in detail, as from the nature of navy payments very many of them could not be carried on by drafts on the bank. The commissioners have likewise fallen into an error, in stating that it was in the power of the paymaster to increase the balance in his hands, by conducting the soliciting of money from the treasury, so as to induce the different boards to which he acted as banker, the transport, navy, sick and hurt, &c. sooner than it was wanted. But in this the paymaster's duty is wholly ministerial. He obtains issues of money upon memorials from the respective boards, expressive of the sums they will require for the service of the month. Nor could his being tardy in his solicitation have the effect to make them apply sooner than the money was wanted. If he were so, his balance, instead of being increased, would be diminished; and on the other hand, his diligence in soliciting could not procure him the additional balance, as in every case the amount of the issues must depend upon the estimates of the different boards, the heads of which must be guided in their demands by the exigencies of their respective services. The statement of the commissioners, therefore, makes against the conclusion they draw; nor, indeed, is there reason to believe that any stratagem of this sort was ever attempted.

In another point the commissioners have fallen into an error. It is understood that there are generally outstanding certain assignments which are entitled to prompt payment, and the money to answer them, as stated by the commissioners of accounts, whose meritorious labours have been alluded to, is entered to the account of the paymaster, or sub-accountant. The commissioners give a state of the balances at the bank, and, making an estimate of the current payments, say that those balances amount in one period to thirty-three and in another to forty-five days

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expenditure, whereas they assert that it need not be above ten or fourteen. This average, however, the commissioners do not calculate fairly, as in the one case they take it on the whole years of the period, and in the other take it not on the most disadvantageous periods of the term they include. But this balance, they say, "is not after deducting assignments outstanding." Now, these should be deducted as the payment is assigned, and it depends on the party holding the assignment to receive it when he pleases. The unassigned balance should alone be looked to. However, upon examining the statement of the commissioners, even upon the principle on which they admit the average should be made, what they estimate at thirty-three days is only the average expenditure of seventeen, and at the end of Lord Melville's treasurership, only fifteen or sixteen, and in some as low as eight days. Now, if on a point of this sort the commissioners have fallen into no less than four errors, it is evident that the accounts and documents must require a more minute examination; and a select committee, therefore, appears to me best fitted to prepare for the house that accurate investigation on which its decision should be grounded.

With regard to the charge of Lord Melville having participated in the profits derived from the employment of the public money, it is particularly necessary that a more detailed examination should take place, as it depends so much upon matters of account. I had expected, however, that, after the solemn denial of Lord Melville on this subject, no suspicion of that kind would be any longer insisted upon. Lord Melville has most expressly disclaimed his having knowingly or intentionally derived any profit or advantage from Mr. Trotter's application of public money. Whoever compares the questions put to Lord Melville with the letter of his lordship, must be sensible that he in the first instance declined to answer positively, because from the blending of the accounts the advances by Mr. Trotter may have been from public money in his hands. On the face of the accounts 100,000*l.* is the whole amount of the advances to Lord Melville. It is known, that of all the sums of 160 millions which had passed

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through the hands of Lord Melville, every farthing has been applied to the purposes for which it was issued, and has been regularly accounted for. But if it is thought necessary to fix minutely the balances that may have existed at particular periods in the running account between Lord Melville and Mr. Trotter, a minute examination is indispensable. When that takes place, it will be found that of 100,000*l.* which, on the face of the account, was paid to Lord Melville, many of the draughts, though bearing the name of Lord Melville, were in reality payments for public services. If this can be made out, as I am informed it can, it will place this matter in a new light, and is of itself a conclusive argument for farther inquiry. Let it be remembered too that, in drawing any inference from the accounts, it will be necessary to make allowance for the sums which Mr. Trotter was in the habit of receiving for Lord Melville, his salary as treasurer of the navy, as lord privy seal of Scotland, and other sums not appropriated there.

These points present subjects of various and important investigations, which, till they be performed, it is inconsistent with every principle of liberality and justice, to state as the foundation of any suspicion that Lord Melville was in any manner connected with Mr. Trotter in speculations of profit from the public money. As Lord Melville, however, disclaims any such understanding of mutual advantage, I trust that this charge of participation will be abandoned. Nay, if it should turn out that, in consequence of the blending of accounts, Lord Melville should unknowingly have received an advance of money which belonged to the public, I submit it to the candour of the house, or of any member, whether that circumstance could attach any stain of sordid motive to Lord Melville, from which his character is so averse? I cannot believe that the house, that any individual could, not merely in consistency with the feeling of liberality, but the dictates of common sense, be so unreasonable as to accuse on such narrow grounds Lord Melville of having been influenced by pitiful considerations of personal profit.

Upon the whole, however, as there are no materials before the

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house, on which they can form a fair judgment; as the parties accused have not had a fair trial, have not enjoyed the right of hearing the charges and meeting them by evidence and explanation; as the conclusions passed in the house are many of them drawn from accounts detailed, and difficult to be unravelled, which a committee can alone state with clearness and precision; as the appointment of such a committee, while it interposes little or no delay in the determination of this important subject, will enable the house to do justice at once to the country and to the parties accused. I shall conclude with moving, "That a select committee be appointed to consider the tenth report of the commissioners of naval inquiry, and the documents therewith connected; that they examine the same, and report their opinion thereon to the house."

At the suggestion of Mr. Fox, who was desirous that the original motion should appear on the journals of the House, Mr. Pitt consented to shape his amendment in a different form; and, instead of the resolution he had proposed, he moved the *previous question*, intimating that, should that be carried, he should then move for the committee he had mentioned.

The house at a late hour came to a division;

For the previous question	216
Against it	216

The numbers being thus equal, the Speaker gave his casting vote against Mr. Pitt's amendment. The original motion was then put and agreed to.

The succeeding resolutions were afterwards put *seriatim*, and carried in the affirmative without interruption, until the eleventh; upon which Mr. Pitt moved an amendment to leave out the concluding words "has been guilty of a gross violation of the law, and a high breach of duty," and to insert the words "has acted contrary to the intentions of the said act."

This amendment, after some discussion, was withdrawn; Mr. Pitt moving in its stead to insert after the words "for purposes of private interest or emolument," the words "to Mr. Trotter," because, he argued, there was no proof or confession that Lord Melville connived at the drawing out of the money for his own interest or emolument; nay, he had in his letter denied it.

The words "as acknowledged by Lord Melville" were added to the amendment by Sir William Pulteney, and the motion thus amended was read from

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the chair. The question being then put on the motion as it originally stood, the Speaker declared that the Ayes had it.

The two remaining resolutions were afterwards put and carried *.

May 6, 1805.

His Majesty's answer to the late resolutions of the House of Commons having been reported to the House, Mr. Whitbread moved, "that the answer be taken into consideration;" intimating his intention of afterwards moving an address to his Majesty, praying him to order the name of Lord Melville to be erased from the privy council, and to dismiss him from his presence for ever.

Mr. Pitt:—

Before, Sir, the motion is put from the chair, I think it necessary for me to make a very few observations, which appear to me of such a nature as will supersede the necessity of agitating the question at greater length, on the present occasion. When I interrupted the honourable gentleman†, it was for the purpose of saying, that I had a communication to make to the house, which might probably render his motion unnecessary; that communication is, Sir, that the object which the honourable gentleman has in view, is already accomplished. I have felt it my duty to advise the erasure of Lord Melville's name from the list of his Majesty's privy counsellors; his Majesty has acceded to this advice, and that erasure will, on the first day that a council is held, take place.

Having said thus much, I shall, with the permission of the house, say a few words on the circumstances under which I formerly resisted this proposition, and those under which I have felt myself bound to yield to it. The honourable gentleman has thought proper to allude to the discussion which took place on the day previous to the recess; and he says, that, on that occasion, I de-

* In a debate on a subsequent night, these resolutions were ordered to be laid before his Majesty by the whole house.

† Mr. Whitbread.

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clared that nothing then appeared to me which called for my advising his Majesty to erase the name of Lord Melville from the list of privy counsellors. I believe, Sir, it is in the recollection of the house, that a motion similar to that now brought forward, was produced by the honourable gentleman on the day to which he has alluded. On that occasion I did state that the motion appeared to me altogether unnecessary, since Lord Melville had resigned his official situation, and all prospect or hope of his return to office was extinct, as long as the resolutions of the 8th of April remained in full force. Unless the house varied their decision, that determination was an insuperable bar to the noble lord's return to power. At that time it did not appear to me to be the sense of the house that such a motion should be persisted in, or that it was at all necessary after the resolutions of censure on a former evening. Many gentlemen who concurred in those resolutions, thought that the wound which had been inflicted, should not be aggravated by any unnecessary circumstances of severity; that when the justice of the public was satisfied, the feelings of the individual ought not to be outraged. Even several gentlemen on the other side of the house did not seem to wish that the motion should be pushed to a division. The motion was accordingly withdrawn, and in the room of it the house agreed to lay the resolutions before the throne, and to await the ultimate decision of his Majesty. By following this course, it was imagined, that the same result would be obtained without wounding the feelings of the noble lord, who was already sufficiently afflicted by the general decision of the house. This step then being taken, it did not strike me that it was at all expected that it was my duty especially to advise his Majesty to erase the name of Lord Melville from the list of his privy counsellors. If I had conceived this to be the general wish of the house, I should, unquestionably, have bowed to it; but not viewing the matter in this light, I did not conceive that I was bound to give the advice which the motion of the honourable gentleman is calculated to enforce. Since that time, however, in consequence of the notice of the honourable gentleman to renew his motion, I have felt it my duty to as-

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certain what is the prevailing feeling of gentlemen on the subject. I have had occasion to ascertain the sentiments of respectable gentlemen on both sides of the house, and seeing reason to believe that the step to which the motion of the honourable gentleman is directed, was considered expedient, I have, however reluctantly from private feeling, deemed it incumbent on me to propose the erasure of the noble lord's name from the list of privy counsellors. I confess, Sir, and I am not ashamed to confess it, that, whatever may be my deference to the house of commons, and however anxious I may be to accede to their wishes, I certainly felt a deep and bitter pang in being compelled to be the instrument of rendering still more severe the punishment of the noble lord. This is a feeling of which I am not ashamed. It is a feeling which I will not, which I cannot erase from my bosom. It is a feeling which nothing but my conviction of the opinion of parliament, and my sense of public duty could possibly have overcome.

After what I have said, I trust the honourable gentleman will see the propriety of withdrawing his motion. Every public object is now obtained which the motion could accomplish, and I am sure the honourable gentleman has candour and humanity enough not to press a discussion, the only effect of which must be to wound the already severely afflicted feelings of an unfortunate individual.

Mr. Whitbread withdrew his motion.

May 13, 1805.

THE House having proceeded to the order of the day for taking into consideration the petition of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, and the petition being read by the clerk at the table,

Mr. Fox, in a speech of considerable length, moved, "that the petition should be referred to a committee of the whole house."

After the question had undergone much discussion, Mr. PITT, at a late

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hour in the second night's debate, rose and expressed his sentiments as follows:

Differing, Sir, as I do, from the honourable gentleman who proposed this motion, and differing also in many respects from several of those who have opposed it, I feel it necessary to state shortly, but distinctly, the views, the motives, and the grounds upon which that difference of opinion is founded. But in doing this, I cannot refrain from expressing, in the first instance, the very great satisfaction I feel at the temper and the moderation with which the motion was introduced, and with which, for so many reasons, I am particularly desirous that the discussion should be conducted. Happy am I also, that the manner in which the subject has been introduced, has relieved me from the necessity of entering at large into those general principles and grounds which, when the question was discussed before, I felt myself compelled to do.

I observe with pleasure, that the application made by the petitioners has not been advanced as a claim of right, but of expediency. I observe also, with equal pleasure, that the honourable gentleman has argued it upon that ground; not that I mean to infer that the honourable gentleman has abandoned the opinion he held upon that subject, but that in the application of the principles which have governed his conduct, he has thought proper to discuss the question upon the ground of expediency. That is the ground upon which I feel the measure ought alone to be discussed: for I cannot allow that, at any time, under any circumstances, or under any possible situation of affairs, it ought to be discussed or entertained as a claim or question of right. I, Sir, have never been one of those who have held that the term emancipation is, in the smallest degree, applicable to the repeal of the few remaining penal statutes to which the catholics are still liable. But, possibly, in my view of the grounds of expediency, I may think it to be much more contradistinguished from the question of right than the honourable gentleman does. He seems to consider that there is only a shade of difference between the expediency and the right; whereas my view of the difference is broad,

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evident, and fundamental. I consider right as independent of circumstances, and paramount to them, whilst expediency is connected with circumstances, and, in a great measure, dependent upon them.

With regard to the admission of the catholics to franchises, to the elective franchise, or to any of those posts and offices which have been alluded to, I view all these points as distinctions to be given, not for the sake of the person and the individual who is to possess them, but for the sake of the public, for whose benefit they were created, and for whose advantage they are to be exercised. In all times, therefore, and upon every occasion, whether relating to the Roman catholic or the protestant dissenter, to the people of Ireland, or to the people of England, I have always, from a due regard to the constitution, been of opinion, that we are bound to consider, not merely what is desired by a part, but what is best and most advantageous for the whole. And, therefore it is, that I think it not sufficient to shew, that what is demanded is not likely to be prejudicial, but that it is proper to take a comprehensive view of all the circumstances connected with it, whether they relate to the time at which the measure is proposed, the manner in which it is discussed, or the effect that is likely to follow from the discussion. That, Sir, is my view of contemplating the propriety of acceding to the wishes of the catholics, or of refusing them. It was upon that principle that I felt satisfaction in the repeal of those laws against the catholics which have been abolished; and from the abolition of which I certainly am not one who infers that danger to the country, with which some gentlemen seem to be so deeply impressed. But, deeply as I felt that satisfaction, I also felt that in no possible case previous to the union could the privileges now demanded be given, consistently with a due regard to the protestant interest in Ireland, to the internal tranquillity of that kingdom, the frame and structure of our constitution, or the probability of the permanent connexion of Ireland with this country. It is true, that after the union, I saw the subject in a different light; but whilst that event was in contemplation I did state, as the honourable gentleman says,

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that the measure would make a material difference in my opinion; but he has also stated, what is very true, that I did not make a distinct pledge. On the contrary, I believe the line of argument I took was, that if it should be thought right to give what the catholics required, it might be given after the union with more safety to the empire; or if it were thought proper to refuse giving it, that it might then be refused without producing those disastrous consequences which might have been apprehended before the union. I come, then, to the present discussion, perfectly free and unfettered. I certainly was of opinion, that under an united parliament those privileges might be granted under proper guards and conditions, so as not to produce any danger to the established church, or the protestant constitution. And I remain this day of that opinion, and I still think, if, from other circumstances, there was no objection to complying with the demands of the catholics, and if by a wish they could be carried into effect, I own I see none of those dangers which have been urged by some gentlemen, nor do I think that the introduction of a certain proportion of catholics into the imperial parliament would be likely to be productive of any influence or effect detrimental or injurious to the welfare of the state, or the safety and security of the constitution.

But, Sir, in delivering this frank opinion, I do not mean wilfully to shut my eyes to this conviction, that a catholic, however honourable his intentions may be, must feel anxious to advance the interests of his religion: it is in the very nature of man; he may disclaim and renounce this wish for a time, but there is no man, who is at all acquainted with the operations of the human heart, who does not know that the catholic must feel that anxiety whenever the power and the opportunity may be favourable to him. But, if these guards and conditions to which I have alluded had been applied, and which, could my wishes have been accomplished, it would have been my endeavour to have applied, I firmly believe no danger would have existed, and no injury could have been apprehended. I thought so on grounds different from those which have been stated by others, not because as catholics

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they had been engaged in any of the scenes preceding the rebellion. I do not mean, however, to say, that the catholics were not engaged in it in greater numbers for the reasons that have been stated.—I go further; though jacobin principles were the foundation of the rebellion, yet I do not mean to deny, that the influence of the priests themselves, tainted with jacobin principles, might not have aggravated the evil, though they were not the cause of it. My idea was not to apply tests to the religious tenets of the catholics, but tests applicable to what was the source and foundation of the evil, to render the priests, instead of making them the instruments of poisoning the minds of the people, dependent in some sort upon the government, and thus links, as it were, between the government and the people. That would have been a wise and a comprehensive system; that would have been the system which I should have felt it to be my wish, and thought it to have been my duty to have proposed. I never thought that it would have been wise or prudent to have thrown down rudely or abruptly the guards and fences of the constitution; but I did think, that if the system I have alluded to had been deemed proper to be adopted, it ought to have been accompanied with those checks and guards, and with every regulation that could have given additional respect and influence to the established church, to the support and protection of the protestant interests, and to the encouragement of every measure that could tend to propagate and spread the example of the protestant religion. These were the general views and intentions I entertained. And if, Sir, it had been possible to have found that general concurrence which I so anxiously desired; if I could have carried them into effect in the manner I have stated; if persons of more ability and experience than myself would have digested them, I am still inclined to think, that, instead of being attended with those dangerous consequences which some gentlemen apprehend, they would have afforded increased security to the church, and have been favourable to the welfare of the state, to the stability of the constitution, and to the general strength and interest of the empire.

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But when I state this, I must also remind the house, that I considered the period of the union as the period favourable for the adoption of such a measure, not because any pledge had been given, but because there was a greater likelihood that the measure might be adopted after the union than before it. The period was favourable also on another account, favourable from the recent impressions that might be expected to be made on men's minds, of the probability of increased security from the union; from being amalgamated and incorporated with the imperial legislature, remote from the dangerous influence that might at times be supposed to operate upon, and overawe the local legislature of Ireland. Sir, I repeat, that if, under the recent impression of these circumstances, I could have brought forward the measure as the first fruits of the union, I should have hoped there might have been a disposition to have received it without rekindling those religious animosities, or reviving those contending interests, between catholic and protestant, which, whenever they do exist, are most adverse to the welfare, the prosperity, and the happiness of the state.

This was the view in which I considered this most important subject; these were the objects which I wished to attain; but circumstances, unfortunate circumstances, in my opinion, rendered it at that period impossible to bring forward the measure in the way in which I then hoped it might be practicable to bring it forward—in the only way in which I think it ought at any time to be brought forward—in the only way in which it could be brought forward, with advantage to the claims of those whose petition is now under consideration, or with any hope of reconciling all differences, of burying all animosities, and of producing that perfect union, in the advantages of which gentlemen on all sides so entirely concur. What the circumstances were to which I allude, as having at that time prevented me from calling the attention of parliament to this subject, in the manner and with the prospects which I wished, it is not now necessary for me to state. All the explanations which I thought it my duty to give, I gave at that time—more I do not feel myself now called upon to give, and

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nothing shall induce me to enter into further details upon this subject. I shall, therefore, now content myself with stating, that the circumstances which made me feel that it was then improper to bring forward this question, and which led to the resignation of the then administration, have made so deep, so lasting an impression upon my mind, that, so long as those circumstances continue to operate, I shall feel it a duty imposed upon me not only not to bring forward, but not in any manner to be a party in bringing forward or in agitating this question.

Having said thus much, Sir, upon the opinions I then entertained, and upon the principles which then, and I trust always will, govern my conduct, I think it right to add, that the whole of the plan which I had formed, the whole essence of the system which I meant to have proposed, was a measure of peace, of union, of conciliation—a measure which I did hope would have had the effect of softening down all religious differences, of extinguishing all animosities, and of uniting all men of both religions in one common zeal for the preservation of the constitution, and for the general happiness and prosperity of the empire. But, desirous as I then was of proposing this measure, and sanguine as I was in my hopes of its success, nothing could be further from my intention than to bring it forward if there did not appear a rational prospect of its being carried, (not with unanimity, for upon such an important subject that I knew was impossible) but with general concurrence, because I knew, that, if it were brought forward under other circumstances, instead of producing the effect I wished, it would only tend to revive those animosities which I wished to extinguish, to aggravate those differences which I wished finally to remove. Not being able, from the circumstances to which I have alluded, to propose the measure which I thought likely to be productive of such beneficial effects, I did then form the determination not to press it at any period, unless I thought it could be done with that prospect of success, and with that general concurrence, without which it can never be beneficial. When I use the term general concurrence, I am sure I shall not be supposed ever to have been so vi-

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sionary as to imagine that a question of such immense importance, and upon which men's feelings and passions are so strongly excited, could ever be carried with perfect unanimity; but I mean with that general concurrence which would have enabled us to gratify the wishes of one party, without awakening the fears, or exciting the jealousy of the other. Whatever gentlemen may think of the abstract rights of the petitioners, or of the expediency of complying with the prayer of their petition, I am sure they will agree with me in thinking, that the chance of extinguishing all those animosities which have unfortunately prevailed, and of producing that perfect union which we all wish, must depend upon the combination of circumstances under which the measure is brought forward. Not having in any degree changed my opinion upon this subject, regarding it in the same point of view I did then, and retaining the same feelings, I must say that at the present moment I think I see little chance, I should rather say I see no chance, of its being carried at all, certainly not in that way which I meant, and in which way only I think it can be productive of real advantage to the petitioners, or of benefit to the state, I mean as a measure of peace and conciliation.

If then, Sir, the question is not now to be carried, I think that to agitate it, under such circumstances, will only tend to revive those dissensions which we wish to extinguish, to awaken all that warmth and acrimony of discussion which has heretofore prevailed, and to excite those hopes, which, if they are to be disappointed, may be productive of the greatest mischief. As to the chance of carrying the question at present with general concurrence, of gratifying the catholics without offending the protestants, of confirming the affections of the one without raising the suspicions and exciting the fears of the other, not only in Ireland but in England, I confess there appears to me to be none. I lament it as much as any man can do. I lament that the impression which now prevails has taken place; many circumstances have combined to produce that impression, all of which are to be deplored. I ask any gentleman whether he does not believe,

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looking to the opinions of the members of the established church, of the nobility, of the men of property, of the middling and respectable classes of society—I ask him, whether he does not believe, looking at the sentiments of the mass of the protestants of this country and of Ireland, that there is the greatest repugnance to this measure, and that even if it could now be carried, so far from producing conciliation and union, it would tend, on the contrary, to disappoint all the prospects of advantage which under other circumstances would be derived from it? Even those gentlemen who have argued the most strongly in favour of this measure have candidly confessed, that, in the present state of men's minds, it is not likely to be carried. I am sure I shall not be contradicted when I say, that ever since the union this subject has in a very considerable degree attracted public attention, and that of late, notwithstanding the other events which have occupied the public mind, it has been the subject of much conversation both in public and private, particularly since the catholic petition has been presented, and since the honourable gentleman has given notice of his present motion; and I should disguise my real sentiments, if I did not say that at present the prevailing sentiment is strongly against this measure: what circumstances may occur to overcome that sentiment it is not for me to predict or conjecture.

In speaking of the probability of carrying this question at this time, I cannot but advert to what fell from the honourable gentleman who opened the debate this day respecting the decision which took place last night in another place. I know perfectly well that no man can mention the decision of another branch of the legislature, for the purpose of influencing, much less of controlling the decision of this house. I know there are many instances where differences of opinion have prevailed between this and the other house of parliament, in which the sentiments of this house, in concurrence with the public opinion properly expressed, have ultimately prevailed. I am as far as any man, Sir, from wishing not to hold high the undoubted privileges of this house; but if I am right in my general view of this subject, I

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think the determination to which I am alluding ought not to be laid out of our consideration, because it goes to the very essence of the measure itself, I mean as far as relates to the practical advantages that are to be derived from it. Supposing, then, that we were all agreed as to the propriety of granting the prayer of this petition, is it not our duty to consider what bad effects might be produced by the marked difference which would then subsist between this house and the other branch of the legislature upon this subject? If carried at all, it ought, as I have already stated, to be carried with general concurrence; and when an endeavour is made to carry a measure, the object of which is to conciliate one part of his Majesty's subjects, care must be taken not to shock the feelings of a much larger class of the community. Under such circumstances, when such an opinion has been given by another branch of the legislature, we are bound to take it into our consideration in deciding upon the line of conduct we ought to adopt, because this is a subject in which no man can act wisely or prudently who acts entirely from his own views, or his own feelings. It is his duty to his country, to the catholics, and to the community, to look at it in a combined point of view, to consider all the probable effects which the carrying of it (if it were practicable) with such a strong sentiment prevailing against it, or which the failing to carry it may produce. Upon this part of the subject there is one point on which I wish to say a few words.

It has been urged by some gentlemen, that we ought to go into a committee, whatever we may resolve to do at last; and some of the minor grievances under which the catholics are said to labour have been pointed out, upon which it is said there can be no difference of opinion on the propriety of granting them relief—such as the circumstance of catholics engaged in a military life coming over to this country, and who are thereby exposed to the operation of the test act, to which they are not at home. Another circumstance which has been mentioned is, that the catholics in the army are not only not to be allowed to have mass performed, but they are compelled to attend protestant

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worship. Sir, I contend that these points are much too unimportant to induce us to go into a committee upon a petition which embraces the whole of this important subject, and which excites the hopes and fears of all the subjects of the united kingdom. I again repeat, that I do lament that this subject has now been brought forward; I lament for the sake of the catholics themselves; I lament for the general interests of the country, that gentlemen have thought proper to agitate this subject at this moment. That gentlemen have a perfect right to exercise their judgment upon this subject I do not deny; I do not complain of their conduct; I only lament that they have felt it their duty to bring it forward at this period, and under the present circumstances; when, if they were to succeed, the consequences would not be such as we all desire, and if they fail, they may be such as we must all regret.

And now, Sir, let me ask the honourable gentleman, who has brought forward the present motion, and who fairly avows that his object is that every thing should be conceded to the catholics; let me ask the honourable gentlemen* who supported the motion last night with such a splendour of eloquence, what effect this is likely to produce upon the catholics themselves? When the honourable member, or the honourable mover of the question, talks of the effect of disappointing hopes that have been raised, I trust they have over-rated and exaggerated it. But one of these gentlemen did state, that amongst the possible causes of a religious feeling having mixed and operated in the late rebellion, might be enumerated the hope held out by Lord Fitzwilliam, that the claims of the catholics would be taken into consideration. They allege the disappointment of that hope as one of the causes that might have tended to produce the rebellion. If that be their conviction, what must they think who wish to go into a committee upon the petition, and yet are of opinion that they still reserve to themselves the freedom of rejecting it altogether, or of rejecting it in its most important parts? I submit this to the con-

* Mr. Grattan.

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sideration of the house shortly, but distinctly; it rests upon grounds so obvious and so strong, that it will be taking up your time unnecessarily, to debate upon them. I submit this with a wish that the measure when brought forward will be carried with a general concurrence. But the circumstances which have hitherto rendered it impossible for me to urge and press it, make it impossible for me to urge and press it now; feeling as I do, that to press it and to fail, or to press it and even carry it with such a strong opposition, are alternatives, both of them so mischievous, that it will be difficult to decide between them. Seeing, Sir, what are the opinions of the times, what is the situation of men's minds, and the sentiments of all descriptions and classes, of the other branch of the legislature, and even the prevailing opinion of this house, I feel that I should act contrary to a sense of my duty, and even inconsistently with the original ground upon which I thought the measure ought to be brought forward, if I countenanced it under the present circumstances, or if I hesitated in giving my decided negative to the house going into a committee.

The motion was negatived;

Ayes	124
Noes	336

June 25, 1805.

Mr. Leycester, after adverting to a resolution passed by the house on the 13th instant, viz. "That his Majesty's Attorney-General be directed to prosecute Henry Lord Viscount Melville, for the several offences which appear from the report of the commissioners of naval inquiry, and that of the select committee of the House of Commons, to have been committed by the said Henry Lord Viscount Melville; and that the Attorney-General be directed to stay proceedings in the civil suit, instituted by order of the House against the said Henry Lord Viscount Melville;" and after urging, as a more eligible mode of proceeding, the adoption of a parliamentary impeachment, moved, "That the House proceed by impeachment against Henry Lord Viscount Melville for the several offences which appear, from the report of the commissioners of naval inquiry, and that of the select committee of the House of Commons,

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to have been committed by the said Henry Lord Viscount Melville; and that the Attorney-General be directed to stay proceedings in the prosecution which he was directed by an order of this House, of the 13th of June, to institute against him."

Mr. PITT, in support of the motion, expressed his sentiments as follows:

Sir—From the arguments that have been urged against the motion of my honourable friend* behind me, it appears that the great ground of objection is, that the house cannot consistently rescind its own resolutions; there is something that puts it out of your power to attend to it. Now, Sir, to come at once to the examination of these arguments, there is one point which has been rested upon grounds contrary to the fact, I mean the notice. In adverting to that notice, I would desire gentlemen to attend to the dates. On Tuesday and Wednesday, the 11th and 12th, the original question was debated in the house, and it came to a vote on the morning of Thursday the 13th. On that day there was no house, and on Friday it sat again, and entered upon that discussion in which I was particularly concerned. In the next week there were only three sitting days before the right honourable gentleman behind me gave notice that he meant to apply to the house respecting some directions as to the matters referred to the attorney-general to prosecute. When this was proposed, I would ask the house whether I did not distinctly say that the more I considered the circumstances of the case, the more my attention had been directed to it, the more I thought, and the more I conversed upon it, I was the more convinced that an impeachment was a mode preferable to a criminal information. When the discussion took place on this subject, I ask whether it is not in the recollection of the house that I desired the honourable gentleman to put off his motion till this day, in order to have an opportunity of considering whether the impeachment might not be thought the most advisable manner of proceeding? This, indeed, went to such particularity, that I distinctly stated to him that he must be aware that we could not agree to give any fresh directions to the attorney-general relative to this prosecution,

* Mr. Leycester.

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while we were of opinion that the mode of impeachment was preferable. I stated this with a view to assure the house that a motion was in contemplation for rescinding the resolution of the house for a criminal information, and substituting an impeachment, which the house, with a few exceptions, has already declared to be the mode most consistent with the privileges of the house of lords, and better calculated to attain the ends of public justice.

This, Sir, I have taken upon me to state to the house, in order to shew that if it has not been forewarned of the present motion, it is no fault of mine. It rests with gentlemen themselves to account for this subject having come upon them by surprise;—if, as they say, it has in fact come upon them in this manner. This I am sure of, that they had the fullest opportunity to know, that it was proposed to revise the resolution which was passed for a criminal information. How then do we stand? Why, five days ago a notice was in reality given, that this motion was to be submitted to the house. And under what circumstances was the notice given? Was it when there was reason to conclude that the house would be thinly attended? No. So far was this from being the case, that a notice stood in your books for an inquiry into the state of the army;—a subject which gentlemen have stated to be of the last importance, and which it might reasonably be presumed would command a full attendance of the house. What, then, becomes of the assertions of those who cry out against the proposition now before us, on the grounds that a great many members have gone into the country, who ought to be present at this discussion?

But this is not all. The house was in fact in possession of the notice on Thursday and Friday, at the moment when the house was engaged in discussing the vote of credit and other points connected with it, points of the last importance to the empire and even to Europe, and to which they attached so much consequence, that they proposed that parliament should sit all summer, in order to be ready to receive information concerning them. These were surely things that called for a full attendance of the house,

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and there was a full attendance: Upon what ground then do they complain that they are taken by surprise? Upon a mature consideration of the case, I trust the house will be of opinion that this is a complaint without a foundation. Why, then, Sir, this is the situation in which we stood, and these are the circumstances under which the notice, though not perhaps formally, was in reality given. If you are determined to insist upon the point of notice, let us see whether it ought to be considered as extremely necessary in this case from what has already passed upon it. [Cries of "Hear! hear!" from the other side.] Really, Sir, I should be glad to know what there is ridiculous in that? Do gentlemen mean to assert that no measure is to be carried without a specific notice long before? Let us look to what has been done on the resolution of impeachment. On the very day when that resolution was moved, an amendment for this criminal prosecution in the king's bench was proposed, without the smallest previous notice to the house to give gentlemen time to consider the point, without the smallest information that ought to be allowed in courtesy to the person accused, without any intimation that such a thing was to be brought forward; and this amendment was moved, too, as a matter of lenity to Lord Melville. I am not at all questioning the right of the house to adopt such a mode of proceeding; far from it; but I must at the same time be allowed to express my surprise, when I hear them loudly proclaiming that the proposition now submitted to their consideration is contrary to parliamentary usage. With this example before us, can we admit the justice of these complaints? I am sure we cannot, if we pay any regard to our own proceedings on various occasions.

Now, Sir, having disposed of the short notice, about which we have heard so much, I come to another point on which no less stress has been laid. This is the monstrous inconsistency of rescinding a resolution of the house in the same session, and the danger that would result from such a precedent. But what resolution is it proposed to rescind? Is it not true that we had rescinded a previous resolution of the house? A civil prosecution

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had been before ordered by the house, when the honourable gentleman* opposite came down to this house, and proposed that the proceedings in the civil suit should be suspended, and a criminal prosecution substituted in its stead. That proposition was agreed to by the house, and where then is the inconsistency, or the dangerous precedent arising from the proposal now before the house? But, if there is any inconsistency, if there is any dangerous precedent, the practice has already prevailed, and this is surely not the moment when the house would be anxious to adopt a different mode of proceeding. If the object of the resolution now proposed had been by any sort of management to destroy the effect of the votes of the house, or to make it doubtful whether, after the criminal prosecution was set aside, any thing was to be moved in its stead, then, indeed, there might be a fair ground for the arguments urged by the gentlemen on the other side of the house. But when the very resolution which proposes to lay aside the one mode substitutes the other, then surely I may be allowed to say, that there is great reason to be astonished at the opposition given by gentlemen on the present occasion, contrary to their own declared opinions.

Such, then, being the notice, and such the point of rescinding the previous resolution of the house, we now come to another part of the case that deserves a considerable degree of attention. We are told that though they are still of opinion that the mode of impeachment ought to be preferred, yet that this seems to be a sort of stratagem to defeat the object which the house has in view, viz. the ends of public justice; and besides, that it will be thought by others, that the house of commons, in agreeing to such a resolution as the present, would compromise its character for steadiness, deliberation, and consistency. Now, in what manner do they oppose us? One would think, from the course pursued in their arguments, that they really thought, as I before intimated, that the intention was to rescind the resolution for the criminal prosecution, leaving it to chance whether any other was to be proposed; and to set aside all criminal prosecution entirely. In this case

* Mr. Bond.

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there would be some reason in their arguments. But it is impossible that they can understand the object which we have in view, since that very resolution that rescinds the criminal information retains the motion for an impeachment. Which of the two proceedings is really most consistent with the opinions of a majority of the house? What do we propose to put in the place of a criminal information? An impeachment;—that very mode of proceeding for which the honourable gentlemen on the opposite side argued so strenuously at first;—that mode which they have contended to be best calculated to answer the ends of public justice;—that mode which they have said to be most consistent with parliamentary usage, most agreeable to the dignity of the house, and most consonant to the principles of the constitution; on these fundamental broad grounds, they have been loud in their preference of an impeachment. What then do I ask of them? It is to confirm their own sentiments. If they agree to our motion, they have only to adopt that mode of proceeding, for which they were before so urgent. They have, from the beginning, preferred an impeachment; and if that opinion remain the same as before, I only wish them not to impute any improper motives to those who furnish them with an opportunity of acting according to their opinion.

But then they say, that they cannot now accede to this proposition, because the consistency of the proceedings of the house of commons is involved upon this occasion. If there be any inconsistency in this case, it rests with themselves. If this argument availed any thing, it ought to have prevented any criminal prosecution at all in this case. We said, that after the civil suit had commenced, there was no room for the other proceeding. The house, however, rescinded its resolution on that head, and having once determined on a criminal prosecution, we are not now disposed to find fault with that decision. But we do say, there still remains an option respecting the mode of conducting the criminal prosecution which was not before called for. It remains still for us to adopt the preferable mode, and certainly no objection of form ought to weigh against the decided opinion of the

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majority of the house, especially when, in fact, there is no ground of inconsistency, or precedent that can at all be urged as applicable to the present circumstances of the case.

Why then, Sir, taking all these circumstances into consideration, finding that those very persons who before urged the impeachment so strenuously, still retain their sentiments on that head, and still agree, that it is the preferable mode of proceeding; surely the house cannot refuse, on any grounds that have been as yet stated, to adopt that mode which is allowed by a vast majority of the house to be most proper. It is possible, perhaps, to come to the justice of the case, by the criminal information before the king's bench court; but supposing this to be the case, it still remains to be considered, which, under all the circumstances, is the most proper mode of trial. An impeachment, as it has been justly argued, is most consonant to the principles of the constitution. This is allowed. I am sure that every one who hears me, would also wish, since a trial of this nature has been found necessary, that it should be such an one as would be most satisfactory to the feelings of the accused, even upon the admission that both were, in every other respect, equally eligible. This, however, they are not; for it is confessed that the mode of impeachment possesses important and decided advantages. The house surely cannot, on a mere point of form, refuse to grant that sort of trial which is allowed on all hands to be the best, and resort to one which the accused thinks the most objectionable, as the least likely to procure him justice, as the most degrading his rank, and the most hurtful to his feelings.

Now, Sir, as to the grounds on which the impeachment is the most preferable mode of trial, they have been already so very fully stated, that I am in a great measure relieved from the necessity of dwelling upon that point. The right honourable gentleman* over the way declaimed against refinements, and attributed a refining disposition to us on this occasion. He has said, that the only way of collecting the sense of the commons is by their votes; and there is not a more satisfactory way, even though the majo-

* Mr. Windham.

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rity of the house should, upon the whole, have preferred another mode, than that which, from the manner of putting the question, they happened to adopt. Now, much the greater part of the house, undoubtedly, prefer an impeachment in this instance. Is there any thing, then, that prevents the adoption of that mode of proceeding? The noble lord,* on the opposite side, who speaks in a manner that always entitles him to the attention of the house, has declared, that he still thinks the mode of impeachment preferable. He still admits it as the most constitutional, the best calculated to promote the great ends of public justice, the most consistent with the dignity of the house, and the privileges of the other house, as well as the best mode for the accused, who will then be tried by his peers. If this be still his opinion, and the opinion of those who sit near him, shall a point of form prevent them from adopting the mode which they think the best? What do they admit? They admit that the trial by impeachment is more suitable to the constitution, best calculated to obtain justice, more consistent with the character of the object, better adapted to the nature of the crime. All these are great and broad points superior to any question of form, and with these views of the matter are they now to retract their opinions, and vote for a criminal information?

A right honourable gentleman said, that he was not satisfied that the crime was of a nature that called for an impeachment. In that opinion he will not, I believe, find many members of this house disposed to join him. But at all events, he has admitted that the character of the object is such, that, in that view at least, an impeachment would be the preferable mode of proceeding. But he will recollect that one of the grounds on which the accusation rests is the improper application of the public money, which is admitted by the noble lord himself. Let it be observed, however, that if the noble lord's words are to be taken hold of in this manner, the effect of the whole of them together ought to be stated. He has not allowed that he made any use of the money which he obtained for his own advantage; but he has

* Lord Henry Petty.

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expressly declared, that he will not disclose what he has done with one part of it. This, surely, comes under the description of a state crime. He has told you, that the money has been expended in secret services, which he does not feel himself at liberty to disclose. That is indubitably a question more fit for the decision of the lords on an impeachment than for an ordinary court of law. Why, then, upon a consideration of all these circumstances, I must again express my surprise, that any opposition should be made to this motion, the object of which is to give effect to that mode of proceeding which is really and substantially preferable. If gentlemen are of opinion that an impeachment is the most proper mode of trial, I am at a loss to conceive how they can counteract their own principles, and oppose that which, by their own admission, is upon the whole by far the most desirable.

But it is urged by an honourable gentleman against an impeachment, that the time necessary to bring it to a conclusion is so long, that the ends of justice may be defeated. Here he will not be countenanced by many of the gentlemen of this house. He has mentioned the case of an impeachment which required two years to bring it forward. However, there is no reason to suppose that the matter can meet with any greater delay than it would do in a court of law. It will be begun immediately after the assembling of parliament. But to prove the delay that generally takes place in impeachments, we have been told of the case of Mr. Hastings. Can any man really suppose that the present case is to be compared with that which required such a voluminous mass of evidence, parole and written, so many documents from the other side of the globe, which involved such a variety of complicated matter? If this doctrine was to be pushed to its utmost extent, what would be the effect of it? It is an argument that, if allowed to weigh with the house, would prevent it from ever exercising the right of impeachment. This right, however, the house will not be disposed to give up; and yet the argument, if pushed to its utmost extent, would go this length. No case would ever occur, in which it would not upon this prin-

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ciple be better to have recourse to a criminal information, rather than an impeachment. One gentleman did contend that the criminal information would in all cases be preferable; but few of those who now hear me will be disposed to allow, that, on constitutional grounds, a criminal information can, in such a case as the present, be preferable to an impeachment. But while I contend that there is no reason to suppose that this prosecution can occupy any great length of time, I must state, that the case is so complicated that there are great doubts whether it could be possible that, in ordinary courts of law, it should receive that discussion which will be absolutely necessary for the purposes of real justice. We know the variety of matter that the reports contain, and the long discussions that took place in this house. But if we were so long in coming to a decision, and found so much discussion necessary, what chance is there that, within the time to which the attention of a jury must be limited, the case should undergo that full investigation which justice calls for? This proves the superiority of the mode of impeachment, in which the fear of delay appears to be groundless.

Well then, Sir, these are the arguments brought forward against this motion, and these are the answers which certainly appear to me to be satisfactory. Conceiving that the motion was given in full time, and upon proper grounds; considering that points of the utmost magnitude call loudly for an impeachment, instead of the criminal information; considering that several days have been allowed to the house to reflect again on the matter; considering that there is only one case in which an information has been resorted to in preference to an impeachment; considering that every constitutional principle, and every circumstance connected with the justice of the case and the dignity of parliament, call for an impeachment, I trust that no strict adherence to empty forms, will drive the house from the usual mode of its proceeding. The ends of justice will not be defeated, nor is it any intention of ours to do away the effect of the vote of the house, as far as a criminal prosecution in some sort is concerned. But it is our object to proceed in that manner which is most con-

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sonant to the usual forms of the house, best calculated to promote the ends of justice, and, at the same time, most satisfactory to the feelings of the individual; in that manner which is allowed to be preferable by the house, with the exception of a very small number. These are the grounds on which it appears to me that the present motion ought to be agreed to; and I shall sit down with some confidence that the house will not allow the comparatively trifling consideration of forms to prevent the attainment of an object, on many accounts so very desirable.

The house divided on an amendment moved by Mr. Fox, "That the other orders of the day be now read;"

Ayes 143
Noes 166

The question for the impeachment was then carried without a division. After which, it was ordered, "That Mr. Whitbread do go to the Lords; and at their bar, in the name of the House of Commons, and of all the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, impeach Henry Lord Viscount Melville of high crimes and misdemeanours; and acquaint them, that this House will in due time exhibit particular articles against him, and make good the same."*

* This was the last session in which Mr. Pitt appeared in the House of Commons. He died the 23d of January, 1806; being the same day, on which, twenty-five years before, he first took his seat in Parliament.

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